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Author, Author

Competition No 80 Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach the office not later than August 13. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that, the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ. The solution and results will appear on August 20.	own sake and for nothing else - I have met with women who I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel. 3 You can hardly imagine that I and Lord B- would dream of allowing our only daughter - a girl brought up with the utmost care - to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel. Competition No 76 Winner: Deborah J. Knuth Answers: 1 My darling one, I am so miserable; I am so terribly sorry. I came on Saturday. I felt desperate and I just wanted to see your face. My cold has come out. I do hope I didn't give it to you or Crystal. I don't think I can believe you have liked me for my	2 Allison darling, please believe that if it was to be anyone, it would have been you; that I've really been far sadder than I could show, if we were not both to go mad. Please wear the ear-rings. Please take this money and buy a scooter, and go where we used to go - or do what you want with it. Please look after yourself. Oh God, if only I was worth waiting for. John Fowles, <i>The Magus</i> . 3 My Precious Dream-Rabbit, I'm writing this on the terrace outside the hotel. It's a lovely day, and how I wish you were with me, because I miss you all the time, and it's perfectly foul to think that when I get back you will have popped off to America and I shall see you for ages. I'm dashed if I know how I shall stick it out. P. G. Wodehouse, <i>The Luck of the Bodkins</i> .
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The display of mind

John Bayley

BARBARA HARDY

Particularities: Readings in George Eliot
204pp. Peter Owen. £10.50.
07206 05997

GORDON S. HAIGHT and ROSEMARY T. VANARSDEL (Editors)

George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute
174pp. Macmillan. £17.50.
0353 314751

No one has been more successful than Barbara Hardy at analysing the ways in which George Eliot goes about her business as a novelist. Like Proust, whom she greatly influenced, George Eliot uses intelligence itself as a method of stylization: both novelists could be said to secure the necessary "unreality" of the successful novel by subjecting its ingredients - theme, setting and characters - to the frankest possible display of mind. Everything is sorted out and arranged, explained and revealed as a mode of shape and symmetry. Impossible to imagine either novelist creating the sort of characters who, like most of us, are quite simply capable of anything and of nothing, the sort of characters who, in successful art, become Shandys and Falstaffs, Hamlets and Emma Bovarys.

Such an open and unbounded exercise of intelligence produces in its own way the effective limitations and the conventional signs of a Wodehouse scenario or a Scudéry romance. What becomes of the uncertainty in which each person's life is lived in respect of the attentions of his curious neighbour, when that neighbour has all the novelist's privileges? What becomes, specifically, of the unknown relationship between Casaubon and Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, about which so many critics have laid down the law, in terms of its thematic, social, and symbolic significance? The relationship is stylized and set apart by the author, in the same manner and for the same reasons that Fielding sets apart the relation of Tom and Sophia, or Stevenson that of Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver. What in them is standard novelist's instinct and convention is for George Eliot a way of creating a climate of questioning by means of intelligence itself. It helps her secure her artifices in what seems an open field.

As Barbara Hardy puts it in the first and most characteristic of the essays, "Implication and Incompleteness in *Middlemarch*", Eliot handles explicit sexual situations, and "her refusal to give names is probably less a matter of social decorum than a matter of dramatic effect". She compounds the expository intelligence of the essayist with the time-honoured devices of the novelist and playwright, both historical and moral. The result is what E. M. Forster would have called "faking": the novelist-artist's most blessed and essential activity - though of a highly instructive and entertaining sort. And the greatest ally of faking is reticence.

This reticence, because it is not silence, is compatible with a truthful and complete account of what is like for Dorothea to be married to Casaubon, and what it was like for Casaubon to be married to Dorothea. We may not see the point all at once, but when we do, I suggest, everything fits. But the novel's truthfulness is not sustained. In Dorothea's relation with Will we have much more than a refusal to name the passions. We have a refusal even to suggest them. She is reticent about Dorothea and Casaubon, but she leaves things out in her treatment of Dorothea and Will. The omission is both an unrealistic element in an unusually realistic novel, and the cause of imbalance. We can make the criticism in terms of truth and in terms of form. *Middlemarch* has often been praised as a great realistic novel, and more latterly, as a triumph of unified organization, but both its realism and its unity are flawed.

That sets almost too many hares running around. Might it not - for a

start - be just as appropriate to say that the novel's truth, and its realism, both of which are exceedingly approximate and ambiguous terms, are not compromised by any weakness or flaw, such as the relation of Dorothea and Will, but are equally present and not present throughout the whole of the narrative? What seems like truth in the presentation of the Casaubon/Dorothea marriage looks different in the account of that of Dorothea and Will, and yet both are determined by the same kinds of method. George Eliot's intelligence is simply working in its habitual way upon what the narrative specifies. A lot of honeymoons, and not just those between young nubile women and older invalid men, start with physical and sexual difficulties which are got over in time. Dorothea might well have had a child or two and discovered kinds of modified contentment within her marriage to Casaubon. If the latter had died and she had married Will she might have had another child or two and found different sorts of contentment and different sorts of disillusionment too. But this is no use to the kind of narrative George Eliot has to tell us, a narrative in which, as Barbara Hardy remarks, Eros and Thanatos must be contrasted both vigorously and perceptively.

And there's the rub. George Eliot's deepest intelligence, one might feel, is in fact superior to any such contrast which her narrative drive and will-power entail upon her. And so what can be convincingly faked in the case of Casaubon and Dorothea is much less convincing in the case of Will's life-giving marriage to Dorothea. The concealed fake leads naturally to the unconcealable one. Unlike Proust, George Eliot is still in the grip of basic mythic fictional patterns, which she thinks intelligence can control and render intelligence artificial and subvert its kind of open confident authority until these incongruously take on the novel's own traditional and predictable colorations.

It is in order to ignore these that the critic, though not, I think, the common reader, goes to such lengths in speculating and assigning reasons, determined to disengage George Eliot's powers of perception and imagination from the novelistic forms

they have had to assume, as if a separable element of "truth" lay behind the appearances the novelist is working up. "I do not think," says Barbara Hardy, "that the truthfulness of *Middlemarch* is impaired because George Eliot does not tell us outright that Casaubon is impotent". There is a very natural mix-up here about the suitability of terms, which does credit both to George Eliot's powers of authorial mimesis and to the loving care with which Barbara Hardy treats her. It is admirable, and useful, still to be able to treat such great works of art as if what was in them were real, as if Lady Macbeth might have had children or might not have had. But this pretence, like the artist's faking itself, must be tempered with a proper sense of how every play or novel has to work as a contraption. George Eliot is not writing a biography of her characters, though Richard Ellmann, that expert biographer, paid her - perhaps with tongue a little in cheek - the same sort of compliment as Barbara Hardy does, in his essay on "Dorothea's Husbands" in *Golden Codgers: Biographical Speculations*.

Was Casaubon impotent, or not? His creator's reticence is designed precisely to suggest there is a real answer. A modern novelist must say he was, or was not, and in so doing would reveal that the whole business was nothing but a fiction which the writer was making up. In making truth impossible to get at, reticence suggests that truth has - in this context - a real existence. Henry James was both right and wrong when, in the preface to *The Turn of the Screw*, he profited (as so often) from the Eliot precedent and disowned her by deliberately disowning the weakness of "specification". It is that specification which Barbara Hardy and Richard Ellmann are intent on, and good luck to them. That it is far from weak is shown by their interest, and by every reader's interest - in art as in life - in what exactly went on, or failed to go on, between two married people.

George Eliot's specification about Mr Casaubon is not weak in itself, and yet it leads to weakness, to the impossibility of specifying anything at all about what was so "right" in the relations of Will and Dorothea. The vulgarity of suggesting, in a novel that sought so largely to inculcate enlightenment and humanity, that the

heroine was unhappy because her first husband was sexually inadequate, and afterwards happy because her second was not, would certainly have been far from the author's intention. To specify was, in James's view, always a danger for the novelist, because it could lead to this kind of bathos; and *The Turn of the Screw* avoids the weakness of specifying either that the ghosts were real or that the governess was a deluded hysteric. The narrative has, in this sense, no "truth" to be got at. But a narrative as spacious and in the best sense as pretentious as *Middlemarch* cannot afford to leave matters in this state deliberately. The great strength of such a narrative is precisely that there is such real bathos, such elemental human desires and fears, lurking at the bottom of it, and the reader sees these things through George Eliot's medium as he sees - indeed has his attention much more obviously directed to - the thematic and moral pattern which constitutes the essential and proper "unreality" of the novel.

One could say that in a novel as great as *Middlemarch* the unrealities entailed by selection, intention and art are as it were not only compensated for, but purged and transformed, by the involuntary truths that lie about - not fully under the author's control, nor allowed for in her scheme of things. One such is suggested by the comment of the character in Henry James's half-sardonic, half-admiring little dialogue on George Eliot, who opines that if Dorothea had married again at all she would have married a guardsman. Such crudities are indeed a part of the implicit vision. One of the paradoxical strengths of *Middlemarch* is that it treats of body and soul - those characteristic Victorian entities - with equal vigour, and without enfeebling them into a spurious unity. Gordon Haight put the matter quaintly but succinctly in his biography when he spoke of George Eliot's "unfortunately balanced mental and animal regions". This imbalance is one secret of the special kind of "literariness" - in Todorov's sense - which informs her novels. Her intelligence promises revelations while her sense of art exploits the reticence which Barbara Hardy rightly insists on. Another, even more important, aspect of it is her brilliant betrayal of the *Bildungsroman* method, the very method which "literariness" seems especially to

Great novelists must make use of their lives and those of other people on their own terms. Lawrence was well aware of Fryd's infidelities; George Eliot possibly only discovered about Lewes's after he died. But in this context neither author could, as it were, put themselves in their own position. Lawrence did so in *Sons and Lovers*, and his wife subsequently figures in everything he wrote, but not, except in one or two ambiguous instances, as the casually unfaithful person she was. Lawrence recounts Connie Chatterley's successive infidelities, but they are to Clifford Chatterley, not to him. There is something deeply touching about the artist's compulsion to remove sex on to a higher plane - the plane of his own being perceived in fulfilment - while taking a magisterial line with the sex lives of other people. Perhaps all "successful" people do this: certainly both Lawrence and George Eliot do so as successful novelists; but while Lawrence's fantasies about himself have a sure and splendid confidence, as well as a kind of interior fun, George Eliot's projection of herself into happy marriage with Ladislaw remains unconfident and unconvincing. At the human level, the level of "life" which Barbara Hardy rightly calls as witness, it is a part of the effectiveness of the novel that it should be so.

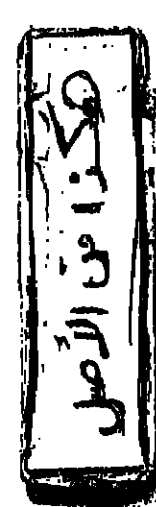
The most subtle thing that "life" requires of a novelist is the sacrifice of his or her own invulnerability. George Eliot pays this price invariably, if less voluntarily than Lawrence in his autobiographical fantasies of revenge against Middleton Murry and others. George Eliot's revenges on the Rosamonds and Lydgates show her up as much as does the fantasy life with Ladislaw, the perfect physical and intellectual helpmate; but, for a great novelist, to be shown up this way is a positive asset, and in George Eliot's case in particular, it corrects the retributive majesty of the biographies!

Stanley Moss

An Eye of the Fleet introduced Drinkwater as a midshipman in the frigate *Cygnet* in 1780 as an observer of the Royal Navy's month-long battle in the Adriatic against the service of the Spanish Navy. The actions fought at sea and on land. A King's Cutter finds him back in the Royal Navy's cutter in 1782, after a little with Trinity House, appointed to the twelve-gun cutter *Kestrel*, commanded by the inscrutable Medoc Griffiths.

'Action to the bore, no romantic bilgewater, a first-rate account of conditions in Rodney's navy.' **The Observer** reviewing *An Eye of the Fleet*.

A King's Cutter is published this week. **£7.50**



The call of the cool

Ian Hamilton

THOM GUNN

The Passages of Joy
93pp. Faber, £14 (paperback, £3).
0 571 119 212

The Occasions of Poetry: Essays in Criticism and Autobiography
188pp. Faber, £6.95.
0 571 117 33

Thom Gunn has always been ready to concede that he is an assiduous poseur; he might also agree that there has been something rather heavily "made up" (both artificial and cosmetic) in the way that he has periodically re-shaped his public image, moved himself forward into an announced "new style", or been seduced by whatever new wave of youthful "cool" has been in fashion during the thirty or so years since he published his first poems.

Early on, Gunn offered his own novel mix of Elvis Presley and John Donne. His poems talked tough, contemporary, but they were also formal and literary. Their author (we could see from carefully posed photographs) was similarly complicated: a leather-jacketed Wild One, a short-fuse loner whose well-educed stanzas could be heard above the noise of motor-bikes, juke-boxes and ill-used protesting lovers. It was a compelling act (this after all was a pre-1960s presentation) and over the years Gunn has found it very hard to follow.

Since the late 1950s, as he traces it, Gunn has shifted his true base from Kent and Cambridge to the West Coast of the United States - at first to study under Yvor Winters (a critic whose censorious rationalism seemed at the time the antithesis of poetic cool) but later to frolic hedonistically with acid-heads and newly liberated gays. His early formal style was abandoned in favour of at first syllables and then an entirely free "free verse", and he bravely declared himself to be on the side of "abstract language" instead of the old "concrete" stuff he had been toiling with before.

He seems also to have been beguiled by the example of the pretentious San Francisco poet Robert Duncan, a poet

for whom the act of writing is (in Gunn's words) "a reach into the unknown, an adventuring into places you cannot have predicted, where you may find yourself using limbs and organs you didn't know you possessed". In terms of American literary politics, Gunn was to be identified with the Redskins - the Beats, the Objectivists - rather than with the Palefaces of the academy or the confessional. Indeed, the only really harsh words to be found in his essays are directed against those who "boast (sic) about experience in hospitals or mental institutions".

Robert Duncan has also been important to Gunn as perhaps the first homosexual poet to have "come out" in his work. In Gunn's new book of poems, *The Passages of Joy* (yes, I'm afraid it is meant to be ambiguous), there is a good deal of "coming out" - coming out of men's rooms, gay bars, one-night stands. Much of this, however, is done with the dizzy relish of one who has for years believed that he would never get to write about such things. The pose of relaxed candour fails to conceal the poet's essential awkwardness:

It wasn't ringworm he explained it was speed made those blotches all over his body

On the catwalk above the turning wheels, high on risk

his luck and the resources of the body kept him going we were balancing

up there all night grinning and pasting hands black with machine oil grease monkeys of risk and those wheels were turning fast

Although much of Gunn's recent work has been self-consciously to do with "brotherhood, the repression of innocence, the nakedness of spirit" that he has seemingly enjoyed in California, he finds it hard to get these qualities across without sounding rather wet and bogus. Poems, Gunn would say, are forms of discovery, processes of revelation; the true poet has to be a bit wide-eyed. One can see what he means, but far too often this poet's efforts to repossess his

innocence simply make one want to look the other way.

Though the wind was like impulse, it was not impulse. It was formed by it, I was formed by the exercise it gave me. Exercise in stance, and in the muscle of feeling. I became robust standing against it as I breathed it so gladly. Or perhaps this is what is meant by an "exercise poem".

The most genuine poems in *The Passages of Joy* are in a group of nostalgic, flat and exact pieces about Gunn's dead friend, Tony White - in these, there is no hint of narcissism, nor is there any forcing of sentiment. Their tone is similar to the tone used by Gunn in a long autobiographical essay towards the end of *The Occasions of Poetry*: it is cordial but reticent. In the poems, this reticence is easy to respect but in a prose essay called "My Life up to Now" it often seems excessive. Sometimes it leads straight into the most dreadful cliché:

I spent a few weeks in New York, beginning a lifelong romance with it. If England is my parent and San Francisco is my lover, then New York is my own dear old whore, all flash and vitality and history.

At others, it induces an odd near-flirtatiousness, particularly in the more heated passages where Gunn makes a show of telling all. On his attachment to LSD, for example, he writes:

These were the fullest years of my life, crowded with discovery both inner and outer, as we moved between ecstasy and understanding. It is no longer fashionable to praise LSD, but I have no doubt at all that it has been of the utmost importance to me, both as a man and as a poet. I learned from it, for example, a lot of information about myself that I had somehow blocked from my own view.

The invitation, surely, is for us to wonder: what discovery? what information? But he never tells. Nor is he less playful later on when we are told that he gave up the drug because "I had a couple of bad trips" that taught me no end of unpleasant facts about myself. Still, it should be said that the memoir is always readable, has some touching moments, and offers some data about the background to



INDUSTRIAL

Thom Gunn photographed by Bill Schuessler.

Gunn's work than can be found elsewhere.

In addition to the "autobiographical" fragments, *The Occasions of Poetry* also carries a selection of Thom Gunn's literary criticism. For several years, he was a regular poetry reviewer both for *The London Magazine* and *The Yale Review*, and sometimes he showed himself to be a sprightly hatchet-man. Unhappily, none of these items is reprinted here - Gunn, it seems, has now renounced them as too hastily composed. The book's effort is to present the author as reflective and benign. We see him as fond and skilful explicator of Hardy and Fulke Greville, and as awed

apprentice to Robert Duncan and William Carlos Williams. There are also sturdy salutations for contemporaries like James Merrill and Gary Snyder and some avuncular encouragement for two not-so-well-knowns: Rod Taylor and Dick Davis.

All in all, an agreeable, slight volume - not easy to connect with the poems, except in the most general sense. And the influence of Winters on the one hand and Duncan on the other makes for a fairly blurred picture of Gunn's actual taste. But he won't mind all this: the pose in this book, at any rate, is to be without a pose. To which he'd no doubt add: "And even now I pose..."

Purpose before pleasure

Kenneth O. Morgan

IAN BRITAIN

Fabianism and Culture: A study in British socialism and the arts c.1884-1918

344pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
0 521 23563 4

The early Fabians have long had a reputation for cultural philistinism of a peculiarly austere and depressing kind. Their ethic of efficiency and social engineering, their yearning for a planned antiseptic utopia, which eventually led them to uncritical admiration of Stalin's Russia, are often contrasted starkly by historians of socialism with the artistic revolt against Victorianism which surged up in the fin-de-siècle period through William Morris and many others. In *The Future of Socialism* in 1956, Tony Crosland concluded with a memorable salvo directed at the Fabians' creed of abstinence and self-discipline - qualities which Crosland found peculiarly repugnant, as his wife's recent biography has reminded us. Crosland called instead for a new, joyous, flamboyant affirmation of the socialist faith, in contrast to a Fabian viewpoint that was so perfectly symbolized by the Webbs spending their honeymoon investigating trade societies in Dublin.

Yet this received view of the Fabians' attitude to the arts and the pursuit of pleasure is in many ways a paradox. After all, a society which could enlist the active support of such as Shaw and Wells in its early years could hardly have been lacking in cultural appeal. It could capture the imagination of an artist like Walter Crane, a critic like Holbrook Jackson, a drama producer like Granville Barker. Wells in his *Experiment in Autobiography* recalled the socialism exemplified by the Fabians, to which he was drawn as a young science student in London in 1885, as being "under the aesthetic influence of Ruskin... run by poets and decorators like William Morris, Walter Crane, Emery Walker and Dobson Sanderson, brilliant intellectual adventures like Bernard Shaw".

In fact, the conventional wisdom that regards the Fabians as austere, humourless philistines needs sharp correction. It owes much to the dominant reputation of the Webbs, so powerful in later interpretation of the early Fabian years - and devastatingly parodied by Wells in his account of the "Balleys" in *The New Machine*. It is unduly coloured by Beatrice's bleak account of *Our Partnership*: "Owing to our concentration on research and municipal administration, we had neither the time nor the energy to listen to music and the drama, to visit picture galleries." In many ways, this is a distortion even for the Webbs themselves. Even they were not totally incongruous contemporaries of Wilde and Beardsley. A new assessment of the cultural outlook of the Fabians is, therefore, much needed. It has now been nobly provided by a young Australian scholar, Ian Britain. Much admirable writing has been produced by A. M. McBriar, Eric Hobsbawm, Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie and others over the years, to illuminate the socio-political views and intricate personal inter-relationships of the first Fabians. Now Mr Britain's closely argued and fair-minded account enables us to understand another dimension of a small group of intellectuals as crucial to our century as were the Benthamites to theirs.

Britain's case for the defence takes many forms. He examines the literary and artistic origins of many strands of Fabianism - the impulse provided by the romantic creed of Davidson and the New Life Fellowship (which included the young Ramsey MacDonald); the close connection between the arts and social regeneration spelt out by Bernard Shaw; the all-pervasive inspiration provided by William Morris, long after he had moved off to form the Socialist League; and so powerful in the social consciousness of such varied middle-class rebels as Wallis, Olivier and Mrs Besant. Even the Webbs are rescued from blanket condemnation as

philistines. On the contrary, the influences of Goethe and Heine were as powerful in the socialism of the young Sidney as were the dour materials embedded in blue books - at least, until Beatrice got hold of him.

The implications of all these strains had many aspects. There could be programmatic attempts to relate municipal socialism to the exposure of the urban masses to the visual and other arts, a vital part of the Fabian objective as proclaimed by Sidney Webb on the London County Council.

There could be philosophical endeavour to link social engineering with the aesthetic inspiration of the arts, as attempted by Shaw in a prolonged campaign against the "art for art's sake" school which he regarded as frivolous and almost nihilist. There were more practical attempts to involve individual Fabians creatively, as through the Fabian Arts Group, or the theatrical offerings of the Fabian summer school. In the latter, entertainment varied from improving drama by Ibsen or Chekhov to impromptu musical revues, adorned by a "full beauty chorus", on such themes as "The Socialist State of the Future as portrayed by its Opponents". The summer school later reported, with reference to this last spectacle, that "the hilarity engendered cannot often have been surpassed", which one may doubt. The theatrical implications of Fabian stump oratory were also pondered at length. At a more rarefied level, there were serious efforts by many of the original Fabian essayists to define the role of the creative arts within a socialist commonwealth; Hubert Bland was active here. On balance, Fabian energy in the artistic and cultural fields is impressive and sustained. Ian Britain's work will long stand as a powerful, almost definitive, revisionist exercise that adds new depth to understanding the ideas of the socialist pioneers.

Even after this book, however, the rehabilitation of the Fabians as cultural experimentalists can still only be a partial one. After all, the history of the Society was littered with artists and writers who rebelled against what they saw as the severity of its ethic. William Morris's connection with the Fabians was a distinctly tangential one throughout. The Morrisian standpoint, with its medieval, anti-industrial overtones, and the Fabians, with their worship of modernity and machine-made efficiency, were far apart. Wells retreated from the Fabian fold in 1908, admittedly from a variety of motives (including sexual), and later launched fierce diatribes against the cultural limitations of the Webbs and their disciples. Some writers like Holbrook Jackson and A. R. Orage rebelled totally against the artistic puritanism of the Fabian Old Guard, and retreated to the variety of others, among them the Nietzschean metaphysics of the *New Age*, the atomism of the Guild Socialists, the apolitical artistic communities of Eric Gill and Herbert Read. A growing number of young craftsmen and artists found the Fabians' outlook on the art to be unsatisfactory. One of the many

virtues of Britain's book is that it enables us to see why this occurred.

Two main explanations stand out. The first concerned the Fabians' continuing insistence (most vocal in the case of Beatrice Webb) on austerity and the ascetic ideal. Cultural avant-gardism and artistic indulgence were all very well, but they must always be constrained by "a sense of purpose". This could not always be guaranteed. Artistic experiment was good for the masses, thought the Webbs, if it assisted them towards self-realization. It was undesirable if it led to "an absence of restraint" or to elevating "pleasure" above "purpose". Nor can the Webbs alone be shown to have endorsed this puritanical attitude. Shaw himself violently condemned luxury and wasteful opulence in art or architecture; unlike Ruskin, he found Venice in many ways repellent, "a show and nothing else". If he later attacked some of his fellow-Fabians for indulging in "the common British assumption" that "art is immoral", some of his own vagrant writings in the 1890s had helped provide grist for this particular mill. Mrs Besant, too, not one normally associated with the puritan ethic, made much of the danger of "unrestrained and unpruned

luxuriance" in art. It was those guilt-ridden, middle-class professional people, who provided the Fabians with their recruits, who must do the pruning. The balance between self-expression and restraint in the arts was a difficult one. Hubert Bland, an ardent disciple of Walter Pater and the husband of the much-abused Edith Nesbit, was one who found it impossible. This earthly aesthete took refuge in founding the Anti-Puritan League against Webb-style prudery. He died, embittered and disillusioned, in 1914. It is hard not to feel that in these later years much of the earlier artistic revolt, like Bland, was simply swamped by a more powerful Fabian philosophy of centralization and control.

Secondly, there was the acute problem of "Art for whom?" The Society seems genuinely to have convinced itself that its view of art was intended for Everyman on his long march, for the faceless industrial workers in their slum tenements or mining villages, as much as for the lonely middle-class aesthete. But the Fabians were far too remote from the working-class multitude, which they so seldom understood, or even liked, to be satisfactory evangelists in this

In any good library, the works of Marx sit next to those of Arthur Marwick, and it is to the junior of these



Beatrice and Sidney Webb with George Bernard Shaw: reproduced from *The Illustrated Dictionary of British History*, edited by Arthur Marwick (320pp. Thames and Hudson, £4.95. 0 500 27270 0).

process of transmission. When they came across authentic forms of working-class cultural activity, the usual response was one of incomprehension bordering on alarm. Beatrice Webb's contempt for the Victorian music-hall and the world of Robert Blatchford was an extreme response; but even a more kindly observer like Annie Besant found little connection between the artistic *mores* of the halls and the socialist society which was yet to be. It may be doubted whether Marie Lloyd or Dan Leno were viewed as worthwhile components of the new commonwealth. Popular sport such as Association football was, of course, little more than a cultural nightmare. Even enthusiasts among the Fabians for popular music in the form of folk-song or ballads, men like Cecil Sharp himself, or the Rev Charles Marson, were partially undermined by a kind of utopian unrealism which made them hesitant about the value of the tradition they were trying to preserve.

The Fabian view of culture, in short, was elitist and didactic, perhaps inevitably so. As the young Rupert Brooke suggested, in a Fabian lecture at Cambridge in 1911, it was shot through with contradictions. Claiming to elevate the cloth-capped mass proletariat, the Fabians actually took their stand on the assumptions of a small, educated coterie, "an infinitesimal group of the infinitely elect". Such a problem casts doubt on the wider impact of the Fabians' championing of the arts. At a deeper level, perhaps, it casts some doubt on whether socialism can, or should, ever be a truly popular movement. Time makes Leninists of us all.

It is among the many merits of Ian Britain's book that it gives rise to wider speculations of this kind. What may now be needed is to set its analysis against the broader socialist movement of the 1884-1918 period. For instance, the Fabians' variant of socialism needs to be contrasted more specifically with the distinct ethic of the Independent Labour Party, which many artists, Bruce Glasier amongst them, found ultimately far more satisfying than the Fabians, and more truly classless. It needs to be set more forcefully, too, against the wider social and political dissolutions of the 1890s and beyond. But these future reflections and recapitulations may safely be left to the author of a most promising and stimulating book.

The lure of laureateship

Bernard Bergonzi

JEAN MOORCROFT WILSON

I was an English Poet: A Critical Biography of Sir William Watson
243pp. with 24 pages of illustrations.
Cecil Woolf, 11, Mornington Place, London NW1 7RP, £12.50.
0 900821 20 5

William Watson's early life followed a pattern familiar among young literary men in late Victorian England: the movement from provincial aspiration to metropolitan acclaim. Watson was born near Leeds in 1858, though the family moved to Liverpool when he was very young and he grew up in that city, participating in its active cultural life; striving for recognition as a poet, and enjoying the support and friendship of distinguished older members such as Edward Dowden and R. H. Hutton. Watson, though socially insecure, was ambitious and thriving, shortly before his seventeenth birthday he made the long journey to the city of Wight to visit Tennyson, and though he had no previous invitation or introduction he was courteously received by the poet, who tried to dissuade him from following literature as a profession. Watson did not take the advice, but Tennyson remained his life-long ideal of poetic achievement.

Watson spent his twenties in Liverpool, supported by his family, making a modest reputation as poet and critic. He was in no hurry to move to London, though it seemed an inevitable goal. He eventually arrived in the capital in 1890 when he was thirty-two, partly prompted by the metropolitan success of a younger Liverpool writer, Richard Le Gallienne. A year later sudden fame

descended on Watson, when the influential journalist and critic Grant Allen published an enthusiastic review of the second edition of his *Wordsworth's Grave and Other Poems*. For a time Watson was regarded as the leading poet of his generation, though his eminence did not endure very long, being the result of what would now be thought of as a brief phase of media-bias fashion. When Tennyson died in 1892 Watson was commissioned by the *Illustrated London News* to provide a memorial poem; writing for fifty hours non-stop he emerged with "Lacrimae Musarum", a sonorous elegy of some hundred and thirty lines. This raised his reputation still higher; Watson was thought to have inherited Tennyson's genius and he was invited to be a pall-bearer at the funeral in Westminster Abbey. He was regarded as a strong contender for the vacant Laureateship. In this he was not successful, since the poet was to another poet with alliterative names, Alfred Austin, though Watson did receive a government grant of two hundred pounds for "Lacrimae Musarum". This recognition represented the high-point of his career, which proceeded to run slowly but steadily downhill for many more years, until his death in 1935.

Jean Moorcroft Wilson tells the story of Watson's life in a biography that is competent and well-documented but seems dull rather than deeply involved with its subject. She has made good use of manuscript letters, and the fact that unpublished material was available in libraries and that so far Watson has not been "worked over" seems to have been a major motive for the book. Although it is called a "critical biography", Dr Wilson's critical engagement with Watson's poetry is fairly perfunctory, neither attempting to restate his once high

reputation, nor trying to demolish it (which would have been easy but pointless). Watson, as he emerges from Dr Wilson's penny-plain account, was an interesting but unattractive figure, whose career was dominated by the late-Romantic ideal of the Poet, so characteristically embodied in Tennyson. For Watson the Tennysonian ideal was double-faceted: on the one hand there was the wild, gypsy singer, on the other, the Laureate, the pillar of society, who had made a great deal of money solely out of writing poetry.

As a result, Watson's life was subject to contradictory forces. He wanted, above all, to be a poet and nothing else, even giving up writing criticism, for which he had considerable talents. The poet's life meant sponging on friends for money, drinking too much, behaving irresponsibly towards women, and frequently quarrelling with friends and patrons. At the same time he wanted secure and respected place in public life, and was a great cultivator of persons who might be helpful to him, whether in the literary world or the Liberal political establishment. The aftermath of Tennyson's funeral amusingly illustrated the clash of ego-ideals: *poete mundi* and public figure. As a pall-bearer in the Abbey Watson was pre-eminent in the latter role, which was reinforced by Gladstone's grant. Yet once he got the money the Bohemian took over and he started spending it on drink. A combination of drugs and heavy drinking induced a nervous breakdown; he threatened a member of the royal family in Windsor Great Park, was imprisoned and then transferred to an insane asylum. He recovered quickly, but he remained unstable, and such episodes were damaging to his ambitions.

When Alfred Austin died in 1913 Watson still entertained hopes for the Laureateship, but by then they had little foundation. Conservatives disapproved of him as a poet, while the Liberal Prime Minister, Asquith, would not have forgotten a venomously satirical poem that Watson had written about Margot Asquith a few years before. After Asquith was succeeded by Lloyd George during the First World War Watson finally received the recognition of a knighthood, in part, it seems, because of a highly flattering poem he had addressed to Lloyd George. But by then his poetic reputation was only a shadow of what it had once been.

As a poet Watson was an example of what Harold Bloom calls "belatedness". His goal in life was to be a poet, and his poetry is constantly about the sacred task of being a poet, or about other poets, or poetry in general - otherwise known as "Poetry" or "Song". Two of his most celebrated poems, "Wordsworth's Grave" and "Lacrimae Musarum", celebrate great dead poets, reverently placing them in the long tradition of English poetry. Watson consciously inserted himself in that tradition, and deliberately made poetry out of what his great predecessors had written. Even in the 1890s his persistently archaic diction and reliance on inversion must have seemed excessive, but Watson was proud to call himself a traditionalist. He was a smooth, skilful prosodist with a good ear for striking, unusable effects, but without much creative intelligence. He seems to have transferred to read through Watson's poetry is to enter an echo-chamber where lines and phrases from Tennyson's poetry are frequently

audible, accompanied by others from Milton, Wordsworth and Arnold. During his phase of derangement Watson made the exciting discovery that an anagram of his full baptismal name, "John William Watson", was "W. W. alias John Milton"; this was indeed the anxiety of influence.

The complacent sonority of Watson's poetry soon becomes cloying; the uniform plumminess of tone suggests the solemn, full-throated resonance of some late-Victorian Shakespearean actor (photographs in Wilson's book of Watson in his thirties show him theatrically presenting a fine profile, either clean-shaven or with carefully curled mustaches; they suggest that an actorish persona came naturally to him). Watson was a very minor poet but an interesting and symptomatic case in the later fortunes of poetic Romanticism and the accompanying social role of the poet. Watson's best-known lyric is the often anthologized, "April, April/Laugh thy girlish laughter..." It is a graceful piece, but comparison with similar lyrics by Verlaine, or by Watson's younger contemporaries Symonds and Dowson who had been influenced by Verlaine, shows just how conventional and lacking in subtlety and suggestiveness Watson's poem is. But he would not have wanted to learn anything from such quarters. In a solemn Miltonic sonnet called "On Exaggerated Deference to Foreign Literary Opinion" he dismissed "the froth and flotsam of the Seine".

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The consumer cometh

Peter Clarke

ARTHUR MARWICK

British Society since 1945
303pp. Allen Lane, £12.50 (Pelican paperback, £2.95).
0 7139 1075 5

According to Marx, it is the means of production and their ownership which determine the form of society, and changes in these relations which govern historical change. What has happened to British society since the Second World War does not obviously reflect this. The nationalization programme of the Attlee Government could be seen as a change in the ownership of the means of production but it did not herald a transition to socialism. The general line on the left is now that it did not go far enough or, more important, that it was a capitulation to corporatism rather than an embodiment of workers' control. At any rate, the ownership of the means of production looks less crucial when it is only a question of which pension fund holds the equity of a large-scale oligopolistic enterprise. But the ownership of the means of consumption - houses, cars, fridges - has played a much more obvious part in promoting social change. Marx contended that the hand-mill gave contentment to the feudal lord and the steam-mill the industrial capitalist. We may now add that the electric coffee-mill gives society the trendy consumer.

In any good library, the works of Marx sit next to those of Arthur Marwick, and it is to the junior of these

bearded sages of Hampstead that we must turn for immediate guidance. Professor Marwick is the author of an increasingly long list of books on twentieth-century social history, which have paid special attention first to war and more recently to class as organizing themes. His volume in the new Pelican Social History of Britain, grapples with the period from 1945 to the present, with all the attendant difficulties in establishing perspective upon very recent developments. He draws upon diverse sources, some of them familiar, not least from his previous books, and others more unexpected. He likes to quote at length to capture the flavour of literary evidence, but can also bombard the reader with a disconcerting selection of statistics in support of his contentions.

All told, he has provided a workmanlike introduction to a subject which needed tackling, and his claim to have enjoyed writing the book tallies with its good-natured tone.

The story Marwick tells is, on the one hand, one of national decline, of high hopes and missed opportunities in economic and social reconstruction. He dutifully asks the soul-searching question of the 1980s: where did it all go wrong? But his heart is not in it, and, hard as he tries, cheerfulness will keep breaking in. Thus his theme, on the other hand, is also that of social advance, economic improvement and personal liberation. He contends that "from the point of view of the vast majority of the British people, as little interested as ever in major national concerns, the most significant changes in values were probably those related to sexual mores and social relationships...". In short, he clearly

approves of the 1960s, and makes them sound fun, with no puritanical call for subsequent repentance.

The biggest change in the period has obviously been the general improvement in living standards, opening a real range of consumer choices to an increasingly large band of the population. In housing this was seen in the establishment of owner occupation in a clear majority of households by the end of the period. Car ownership followed the same pattern, as did the telephone. This kind of affluence may have produced in some a new sense of complacency. Equally it may have fuelled a new sense of deprivation. While "two million Britons took foreign holidays in 1951, a trip to Southend was a good day out. By the time nine million were going abroad in 1978, it was a crying shame to be left at home."

More acutely, poverty had to be redefined in a welfare state which did not leave the destitute to starve but note the less large numbers of people stranded with inadequate means to participate in the customary activities of the society in which they lived. Partly this was a new problem of values and attitudes and socialization. Partly it was the old problem that the poor did not have enough money. Professor Marwick does not ignore structural questions, like the rediscovery of poverty and the new dimensions of social inequality, but nor does he dwell upon them. He prefers to illuminate his themes obliquely with the anecdotal insight and the telling quotation. He has achieved his aim in breaking new ground and now that he has done so it will be easier for others to follow.

The anti-American case

C. M. Woodhouse

NOAM CHOMSKY

Towards a New Cold War: Essays on the Current Crisis and How We Got There

498pp. Sinclair Browne. £12.95 (paperback, £5.95). 0 86300 019 3

The Americans have a talent for self-criticism which they do not doubt inherited from the British. Noam Chomsky's new book is a striking example. In any other country such a forthright and sustained diatribe against national policy by a prominent academic would be nearly unthinkable. A French professor would not have written such a book about his government's foreign policy; a Russian could not have done so except at the price of enforced exile or commitment to a psychiatric hospital.

Towards a New Cold War could be called, in the literal sense, an unbalanced book because it presents only the case against successive American governments over the past thirty-five years. But Chomsky's real aim is to restore a balance. Without completely neglecting the anti-Soviet case, he argues that it has been exaggerated and wrongly taken for granted. The contrary case has been accepted by default, at least in the West. "I need not dwell on the performance of (the) Red bureaucracy," he says. So he does not. But he has severe words for "the flood of lies" which has covered up US foreign policy.

Ever since Walter Lippmann gave the Cold War its name in 1947, it has been seen as a barely disguised system of aggression by Stalin and his successors. Donald McLachlin defined it in *Defence in the Cold War* (1950) as "the policy of making mischief by all methods short of war that is to say, short of war involving the Soviet Union in open hostilities". Both writers saw Europe as the primary area of conflict. But the "new" Cold War has more complex origins and a wider scope. For Chomsky, the Americans are just as guilty as the Russians. The targets are world-wide. Neither side has avoided committing its own armed forces. And there is also an enemy within (such as Professor Chomsky).

The structure of Chomsky's book does not accurately reflect the symmetry of involvement which he

asserts. Criticisms of Soviet activities occur on perhaps a dozen scattered pages; had marks for US policy occupy more than 450 (counting a hundred pages of notes and afterthoughts); but the total of good marks for US policy is zero. Chomsky's assumption is that the justification of that policy has been sufficiently (though dishonestly) undertaken already by what he calls, borrowing the term from Sir Isaiah Berlin, "the secular priesthood", which is the western equivalent of the Soviet intelligentsia. Some of his most interesting passages are devoted to explaining why, in a free country, the secular priesthood suppresses embarrassing facts and persistently defends the indefensible.

His case against successive US governments is built up from a series of articles published over the past ten years. Three are concerned mainly with Vietnam, four with the Middle East, two with East Timor, and the introduction mainly with Latin America as the most recent area of criticism. Several reviews of books are also included, among them one of Henry Kissinger's "ridiculous memoirs". Europe is little mentioned, except in so far as Britain, France and West Germany are seen as American satellites.

The only European country which appears as a target of the Cold War is Greece. Since Greece gives occasion for an attack on British as well as American policy, it may be taken as a useful example of Chomsky's method and style. Thus:

The first major US intervention in defence of freedom was in Greece, when Britain, which invaded and conquered Greece after the Nazis had withdrawn, could no longer maintain its position there in 1946-47 after its success in undermining the anti-Nazi resistance and restoring royalist elements and Nazi collaborators to state power, setting off a wave of violence and persecution that finally evoked armed resistance.

It might be thought risky to combine irony ("defence of freedom") with factual statements ("invaded and conquered") in a single sentence, especially when the purported facts are as crude as the irony. "Invasion" normally implies opposition, armed or passive, but Chomsky would have difficulty in naming a single Greek who opposed the return of British forces to Greece at the end of the German occupation.

Similarly, when he speaks of "the inability of the British to repress popular forces in Greece", the word "popular" seems to imply some degree of numerical preponderance. But it would be a bold statement, who claimed to know the exact balance of popular support for either side in the civil war of 1946-49. Probably the majority fluctuated with the tide of battle. Still, Chomsky is a professor of linguistics, so presumably he knows, like Humphrey Dumpty, how to show words which is to be master.

The whole collection of articles is written in a similar spirit. A review of such a bitter polemic cannot help betraying a personal view, so let me say without reserve that I agree with many of Chomsky's judgments, particularly on the subject of Kissinger. But there are many disappointing features of his book, apart from the extravagant by events, for example, the Shah of Iran is still an active villain in the present tense, which cannot be satisfactorily adjusted by long addenda in the notes. There is also no indication of a positive policy which Chomsky would approve, with the single exception of a short passage advocating a federal solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict over Palestine.

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that even if the US government had pursued exactly the opposite policies to those which Chomsky criticizes - if it had backed the Greek left instead of the Greek right, Mussadid instead of the Shah, Ho Chi Minh instead of Dien and his successors, the

Palestinians instead of the Israelis, and so on - eventually he would have found it all wrong.

To take the most up-to-date instance, he blames President Reagan for supplying arms to the military government of Argentina. Would he now approve the US government's support for Britain over the Falkland Islands? On past form, probably not; but if he did, it would be the first act of US foreign policy that he had approved for a great many years.

Experience suggests, whether one attributes it to human nature or historical inevitability, that a purely moralistic foreign policy is in practice generally self-defeating. This is no more than an application of Lord Acton's famous dictum about power, which combines the theories of logical inevitability and human nature. A short step of a few years have backed A against A instead of A against B, whether in South-East Asia, the Middle East or Latin America. Chomsky actually makes this point forcibly in the case of the Israelis, whose governments he criticizes as bitterly as his own. The Palestinians, he points out, the Zionists seem to him little better than Nazis.

Surprisingly, he does not recognize that the same reasoning could have been applied to the left-wing guerrillas in Greece, the Islamic nationalists in Iran, the Viet Minh, the Sandinistas, the Fretilin, the PLO, the IRA et al. *genus omne*. His heart is in the right place, but it too readily carries away his head. It will annoy him to be told that he could have made a better case with less fervour, but it has to be said.

Moscow's manipulations

Walter Kendall

ANTHONY CAVE BROWN and CHARLES B. MACDONALD

On a Field of Red: The Communist International and the Coming of World War II. 718pp. Putnam. £16.95. 0 7091 9794 2

The authors of this volume promise us a story of "the intrigues and subversive operations of the Comintern... in the United States, Great Britain and Germany and how Comintern policy in concert with Soviet revolutionary diplomacy contributed to the coming of World War II". To endeavour to portray events on such a scale is a considerable undertaking, and one cannot blame the authors if they have not entirely succeeded. More disturbing is the fact that the book lacks any proper analytical framework and as a work of reference it can have but little value.

Did the Comintern indeed contribute to the coming of the Second World War? That Mussolini could have triumphed in Italy without Lenin's conquest of power in Russia, seems unlikely; Hitler certainly could never legally have formed a government. In 1933 had the communists acted differently, and might never have achieved national prominence at all but for the "Menace of Bolshevism" in the East - the largely artificial split in the German workers' movement which the Russian communists themselves financed and maintained. The Comintern was powerful not only in Germany but also in France. Did the "anti-war" activity of the PCF contribute to the French collapse in 1940? If so, in what way? After Roosevelt's recognition of Russia in 1933, the American Communist Party backed the New Deal, and Party members and sympathizers played a certain role in his Administration, supported "collective security" until the Nazi-Communist Pact of 1939, and thereupon opposed America's entry into the war until Hitler's onslaught on Russia in 1941. What part exactly did communist influence play in determining US policy both before and during the war, not least in the outcome of the conferences of Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam, which determined the shape of the post-war settlement?

Similarly, when he speaks of "the inability of the British to repress popular forces in Greece", the word "popular" seems to imply some degree of numerical preponderance. But it would be a bold statement, who claimed to know the exact balance of popular support for either side in the civil war of 1946-49. Probably the majority fluctuated with the tide of battle. Still, Chomsky is a professor of linguistics, so presumably he knows, like Humphrey Dumpty, how to show words which is to be master.

These are fascinating questions. The authors have had access to hitherto secret intelligence documents, not least certain private papers of General "Wild Bill" Donovan, founder of America's OSS, the forerunner of the CIA. Their account rushes on at a hectic rate, and one feels bound to peruse each of its 664 pages attentively. Will solutions to these and other as yet unrecognized puzzles be forthcoming? One reads on, but to no useful purpose: the answers are nowhere to be found. Instead, a series of popular vignettes of developments in international affairs are interspersed with accounts of the more or less nefarious activities either of Comintern agencies, or of one or other branch of the Russian intelligence system, which the authors consistently fail to distinguish one from another. We learn that at 2.00 pm on March 16, 1917 Lenin was finishing a lunch of boiled beef at No 14 Spiegolasse in Zurich; that Trotsky's American associate Louis Frajnda edited the *Modern Dance Magazine* in New York; that Soviet diplomat Maxim Litvinov was formerly manager of a sugar factory at Kiev in tsarist Russia; that alleged "atom spy" Harry Gold stayed in Room 521 at the Hilton Hotel, Albuquerque on the night of September 19, 1945; that Ribbentrop arrived at Khodynka Airport, Moscow, at midday on August 23, 1939, and disembarked from Hitler's four-engined Kondor aircraft the "Greenback" to sign the Nazi-Communist Pact in the Kremlin at 2.40 pm the following day. The detail is fascinating but it advances the action not at all.

The accounts of international affairs are episodic, compiled in the main from secondary sources, and convey nothing new. The accounts of Russian espionage make "extensive use of the voluminous files of the US Army Military Intelligence Division... never of the Donovan Papers, 'not yet open to the public'. But they reveal already in the public domain. The secret history of the Comintern remains to be written.

None the less *On a Field of Red* raises some fascinating minor issues consistently ignored by everyone. Indeed the more one reads this volume the more one wonders whether certain Western intelligence agencies have learnt from the Communists not only wisely but too well. There are dark places here. One wishes courageous individuals would come forward who are prepared to shed more light.

supported by the USA on grounds of *raison d'état*. The last US President who tried to act on similarly moralistic principles was Woodrow Wilson, and the outcome was twenty years of isolationism. Carter tried to follow Wilson's example, but was quickly overwhelmed by events. The arguments are not encouraging for the kind of foreign policy which Chomsky might approve.

Experience suggests, whether one attributes it to human nature or historical inevitability, that a purely moralistic foreign policy is in practice generally self-defeating. This is no more than an application of Lord Acton's famous dictum about power, which combines the theories of logical inevitability and human nature. A short step of a few years have backed A against A instead of A against B, whether in South-East Asia, the Middle East or Latin America. Chomsky actually makes this point forcibly in the case of the Israelis, whose governments he criticizes as bitterly as his own. The Palestinians, he points out, the Zionists seem to him little better than Nazis.

Surprisingly, he does not recognize that the same reasoning could have been applied to the left-wing guerrillas in Greece, the Islamic nationalists in Iran, the Viet Minh, the Sandinistas, the Fretilin, the PLO, the IRA et al. *genus omne*. His heart is in the right place, but it too readily carries away his head. It will annoy him to be told that he could have made a better case with less fervour, but it has to be said.

Neither of the authors is well informed about either Communist Parties or the Comintern. They are unaware that Arkadi Maslov was, with Ruth Fischer, one of the two top leaders of the KPD (p286). They mistakenly believe that Trotsky attempted an unsuccessful Russian coup d'état in November 1927 (p322-323). They shamelessly transform the New York anarchist Carlo Tresca into a "prominent communist" (p343). They apparently believe that Hitler really was in Liverpool in 1912 (p307) and that the West End Café de Paris, bombed during the War, was actually at Bray in Berkshire (p417). They believe that the Comintern Executive met at Prague on July 26, 1936 and instructed Stalin in Moscow to send supplies to Spain (p427). And, error of errors, they believe that the Union Jack, not the White Ensign, flies over the British Fleet (p56).

On the other hand, despite errors of fact and interpretation, the picture painted of illicit relations between politics and intelligence is rarely without some foundation in fact. The details of the lives of John Reed and Louise Bryant (later the wife of millionaire William Bullitt, the first US ambassador to the Soviet Union) who strike a chord of interest among those who have seen Warren Beatty's film *Reds*. The account of the Nazi role in Stalin's obliteration of the flower of the Soviet officer corps in 1937 covers most of the ground and is well done. The story of Trotsky's assassination is well documented, substantially correct and merits reading by everyone. Indeed the more one reads this volume the more one wonders whether certain Western intelligence agencies have learnt from the Communists not only wisely but too well. There are dark places here. One wishes courageous individuals would come forward who are prepared to shed more light.

WILLIAM GOLDING

A Moving Target

202pp. Faber. £8.95. 0 571 11822 4

"Other literatures are full of books", Borges is fond of saying, "but English literature is full of people." And he is right. Even a La Rochefoucauld or a Glend is less a person than a book, whereas the most minor English writers, an Arthur Machen, say, or a T. H. White, exude a fierce individuality, the sense of a unique person. And this is connected with the fact, often observed, that literature in English is intensely local, the celebration of particular places at particular times. "Cobbett, that John Bull-like figure, rides about the countryside and in his journal seems to embrace and possess the very soil, not in a sentimental way but with a hard and passionate grasp", writes William Golding in one of the essays reprinted here. And though he himself writes novels, not diaries, and prefers to sail rather than ride, the words could apply to him. Even what could be such a bookish thing as a review of a translation of Homer is vibrant with a sense of place and the sense of a particular person, experiencing something profound at a particular moment: "I seem to remember that the last ten lines of book nine... came to me... as a sheer gift. There were grains of sand on the page, I remember, and by my ear, the bristles of marron grass shuddered and stirred their small funnels in the dry, white sand. With that sea beating on that beach, it was not difficult to lie back, repeat the ancient words and hear the familiar surge and thunder."

What Golding himself calls "passionate insight", the ability to "empty the mind of ways of thinking and feeling that have simply been passed on to us from other people, to give voice to one's unique response to landscape or event, informs several of the essays in this volume: on Wiltshire, on cathedrals, on Delphi, on Holland, on Egypt. The journal to which Golding seems mainly to have contributed in the 1960s was *Holiday Magazine*, a publication devoted to accounts by readers of their holidays. This is splendidly in the style of the English individualists: leave *Tel Quel* and Group 47 to the French and the Germans, the important thing is to take your family on holiday, preferably in your own small boat, and then write it up afterwards, giving the sense of light on a particular strip of sea, of someone met in a bar, of a bird or a monument seen for the first time. As with T. H. White, the intensity comes from the fact that emotions do not get channelled into religion or metaphysics but somehow remain in this world, and the struggle between emotion and meanings makes the world shudder a little, and give.

English pragmatism is how Golding likes to describe this, but it is a pragmatism devoid of the usual smugness, aware of mystery but unwilling to settle for easy explanations. After a trip to Egypt, he writes: "We had bathed in natural beauty. We had seen outrageous wealth and privilege. We had seen a child of fourteen, heavily pregnant and labouring through the sand after her decrepit mother. Instead of voyaging to a country and enjoying it I had added unutterable confusion and confusion to a simplistic picture. Perhaps the lesson was the quaintness of going to a country of forty million live Egyptians and expecting to confine your attention to the work of half a million dead ones."

And this pattern is repeated at Delphi: "We had expected, with tireless, human optimism, to come to terms with the riddle of Delphi, yet found nothing." But this nothing is a positive thing, a nagging series of questions which none of the expected answers seems to fit. So: "We shall go there again."

Golding's individuality lies in his ability to keep the doors of puzzlement open. "I lived for years... in a happy conviction that since I had the

wonder in ample supply in time the wisdom would follow", he writes. However, the years passed and nothing changed. "I herewith deliver an interim report and announce that it is possible to live astonished for a long time; and it looks increasingly possible that it is where, for this particular individual, matters start to get complicated. For if in his essays Golding often sounds like the best of the English individualists, such as Arthur Machen, T. H. White, or John Cowper Powys, he is a better novelist than any of them. And he is a vision seriously enough to want to find precisely the right means of conveying his insights, even if that entails taking traditional narrative forms to pieces and then putting them together again in his own way."

This did not come easily. He was past forty when *Lord of the Flies* was written, and he already had thirty-three years of literary activity behind him (his first play, he tells us, written at the age of seven, was about ancient Egypt, but founded when he realized that to do it properly he would have to learn ancient Egyptian). There is an essay here in which he talks about his first published volume, which is not, as many people think, *Lord of the Flies*, but a youthful collection of poems. Golding is nicely ironic about it, recounting deadpan how, after he had sent the poems to Macmillan, they wrote back "offering me five pounds and a place among my contemporaries. Yvonne French, Hugh MacDiarmid, T. W. Ramsey, R. C. Trevelyan, Norman C. Vendell." And, indeed, on the evidence he provides, William Golding the poet deserves to go the way of Yvonne French and Norman C. Vendell. But of course he was a young man. He had not, as they say, yet found his voice.

But what is this mysterious thing, voice? It is obviously as baffling to Golding as anything in his life. He has often tried to account for the origins of *Lord of the Flies*, and the multiplicity of his explanations only reinforces the feeling that he doesn't have a clue. And why should he? As he says, ask a dancer how she manages to do what she does and she will probably say: "Well, I get up on my points and keep time to the music." And yet the irony is that "the older I grow in the practice of an art the less I can find to say about the more often I am asked to speak about it". Of course, though he is baffled by his gift and bewildered by his extraordinary success, he knows that "novelists do not write as birds sing, by the push of nature. It is part of the job that there should be much routine and some of it should be on the level of carpentry." So, if audiences ask him for hints from his workshop, he is prepared to give them.

Rule one is quite simple: "Have one hand holding your pen and the other firm on the nape of the reader's neck." After all, Homer, though he didn't have the benefit of the critic's hat, has grown up round his work, knew well enough "what would draw old men from the chimney corner, what would keep an audience silent in hall and what ensured that he would be asked again." The first rule therefore is this: make sure you have your audience gripped. The second is in a sense a variation on the first: "In a novel, provided the clock does not stop and the character cease to change we can stand as much reality as talent or genius can give us."

This kind of thing is a welcome change from the drivel meted out in creative writing courses. "How did you manage to get that degree of density into your first paragraph?" I was asked by some (American) creative writing students about a story of mine. "I don't know," I said, "it just came." The regular teacher, who had invited me along, gave a bowl of agony. "Don't say that! I've been drumming it into them that they must never do anything without a reason!" But the point is that if a thing works it is because there are a great many good reasons for its being as it is, and these are so numerous and so complex that they can never reach the level of articulate consciousness. Golding's common-sense remarks, the place he rightly leaves for talent and genius, are a recognition that each

Gabriel Josipovici

genuine artist writes what he has to, and if it is what he really has to then he will be able to persuade us. That is why talk about the death of the novel is such nonsense. Art does not die this way, there is no such thing as a dead end in art. Who could have predicted Kafka, Beckett - who, indeed, could have predicted Golding?

Golding has often recounted how he tried for years to write the kind of novels he imagined the public wanted; all came thudding back through his letter-box from the publishers. When he finally, quite casually, decided to write about something he really knew about, in the way he wanted, the public could not have enough of it. Of course one should not make too much of this: *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* are not so very different from Beckett's earlier work, yet *Murphy* was rejected by forty-two publishers even when it was finally accepted, only a few hundred copies, while the work of the early 1950s made Beckett's name famous overnight. Nevertheless, the fate of *Lord of the Flies* is significant and cheering. And its success gave Golding the confidence to go on following his own line, writing three more masterpieces in the next ten years, not one of which is a repetition of any of the others.

There are, however, two conditions which are particularly dangerous for any artist: the first is failure and the second is success. Talking about the carvings on Gothic cathedrals Golding remarks: "You can look straight at the knight or win an international prize. In these days that is the integrity of art that does not know temptation. Alas, those days are past, and the modern artist is only too familiar with temptation. I am not sure that Golding has always managed to resist it."

Art is never a purely natural activity; the artist, even so unconscious an artist as Homer, is always an artificer. The best artists are no doubt the best artificers. Yet the word conceals an ambiguity: there is cunning and artifice in the service of a vision and there is cunning and artifice in the service of oneself. The two are not always easy to disentangle, but they result of course in work of a radically different quality. My own feeling is that nothing in Golding's oeuvre that has followed *The Inheritors* has been wholly genuine, that his eye has been less on what he has to convey than on the effect he is making. And there are passages in this book that suggest that my hunch is right, and suggest also why this should be so.

In his preface Golding explains that five of the pieces included began life as lectures. And he says: "When you get down to it, what an audience wants to hear from a novelist is how he writes. Since how he writes is in intimate association with what he is and how he lives the novelist finds himself in danger of being his own raw material." He goes on: "I have always tried to resist this and have always given way in the end so that at last I find myself talking about myself with the grossest liberality. This leads to nothing but self-disgust." I find the tone of this disturbing. If the self-disgust is genuine, why agree to give the lecture? Even more to the point, why publish such pieces between hard covers? Is there a confusion here which is the bafflement of wonder such as Golding felt in Delphi or Egypt, but a Protestant sort of confusion about guilt and honesty. And the lectures themselves too often reflect this, unfortunately. The tone is both humble and hectoring, it both seems to despise its audience and seeks to woo it. The last lecture is a case in point. Entitled "Belief and Creativity" it is full of such remarks as: "Maxine Davidson and Freud are the three most crushing bores of the Western world." This may be Golding's view, but it does nothing for us except to tell us that it is his view. Should it interest us for that reason? He concludes:

If you have detected contradictions and some screaming fallacies in what I have said, I wish you luck. I am unrepentant and about to perform the verbal equivalent of the Indian Rope Trick. You may well think that the novelist like the cobbler should stick to his last. I will claim from you the privilege, not of the psychiatrist,

philosopher or theologian. I claim the privilege of the story-teller; which is to be mystifying, inconsistent, impenetrable and anything else he pleases provided he fulfils the prime clause in his unwritten contract and keeps the attention of his audience. This I appear to have done, and it is enough for me.

There is some dangerous doublethink going on here. It is true that the first rule for a writer is to hold his audience. But though it is useful for a serious writer to remind an audience of this fact, it must not be forgotten that John Buchan and Agatha Christie knew it as well as writers and that Kafka. Once the writer starts to see it as his main objective he is on the slippery slope. The lesson of *Lord of the Flies* and even more of a book like *The Inheritors* is that if the vision is powerful enough and the writer committed enough to it the reader will be carried along. It is not written with the primary intention of gripping the reader.

What is even more worrying about these closing remarks of Golding's is that he has actually not been telling a story at all; he has been giving us his opinions. To claim the privilege of the story-teller for these, and to go on to make a virtue of mystification, inconsistency and the rest is not just perverse, it does a disservice to art and he is ostensibly praising. Most baffling of all is the prior writing down of the last sentence and then its publication in book form. Surely that is to show remarkably little respect for either his first audience or his readers?

Fame seems to have got at Golding. To judge from these lectures he cannot get over the fact that he is known from Iceland to the Cape and from Timbuctoo to San Francisco. If he has not read he has at least examined every single book that has been written about him. And though part of him dismisses it as nonsense, another is impressed. "Ladies and gentlemen," he begins one lecture, "you see before you a man; I will not say more sinners as usual than sinning, but a man more analysed than analysing." And the title of the whole collection, which is also the title of one of the lectures, refers not to the novelist's quarry but to himself: "It was not long ago that I received a letter from a young lady at a famous English university... She was, you see, looking for a subject for her thesis." Her professor had recommended that she write on a subject connected with Dr Johnson, but "she was not going to write a thesis on anything as dull as a dead man. She wanted fresh blood. She was going out with her critical shotgun to bring home the living. She proposed I should bare my soul." I wrote back at once, saying that I agreed wholeheartedly with her professor. "Someone who had known Dr Johnson, and so was safely dead, he suggests to the young lady, would make a much better target, for he would stand still." "But as for me, I am a moving target."

In one sense this is true and right and proper. But the person who writes: "I am a moving target" is in imminent danger of becoming nothing but a monument. To use this as the title of the entire collection suggests a degree of self-regard which can only be dangerously stifling to the development of the man and the author.

Of course the old skills have not deserted him; but there is a difference. The earlier novels stemmed from bafflement. The experience of the Second World War, he remarks in a review reprinted here, "are like black holes in space. Nothing can get out to let us know what it was like inside. It was like what it was like and on the other hand it was like nothing whatsoever. We stand before a gap in history. We have invented a hint to literature." This is not a modest bowing before the horror of Belsen and Hiroshima. It suggests at the same time the impossibility of comprehension and the need to comprehend, and this is what the early novels use every skill at the artist's command to convey. Those skills were dredged up under the pressure of a violent reality. "The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief. But in *Darkness Visible*

and *Rites of Passage* the skills seem to be used only to make the audience gasp, to make the reader say: "What a powerful, deep writer Golding is!"

The difference is brought out in almost allegorical style by a peculiarity of this book. After a lifetime of wondering about Egypt Golding finally wrote about his visit to a marvel. But he felt that it would be valuable to include one essay from his previous collection, *The Hot Gates*, "Egypt from My Inside", which would enable the reader to compare the imagined and the real. This was an excellent idea and the two form a fascinating diptych. But it was also a dangerous one. In "Egypt from My Inside" there is a central episode in which the little boy, wandering about the Egyptian rooms of the British Museum, is befriended by a curator who invites him back behind the scenes to help unwrap a mummy. This is more than the boy had ever dreamed of, it brings him to the height of rapture. Having described the whole episode Golding writes:

Now it is important to realize that I remembered and still remember everything in vivid and luminous detail. It became the event of my life; and before I returned to the museum I talked the thing over passionately, with my parents and myself. I suffered the terrors of bed. I wrote an essay describing the episode when I went to school, and got extravagant praise for it. I brooded constantly about the lid of the sarcophagus with its hidden face. Yet it is important to realize that none of the episode happened at all.

The writer's cunning, his skill, is here at the service of a truth; the child's passion for all things Egyptian. In order to convey this he has to draw the reader in, to make him too take part in the adventure. In this way the reader will discover how powerful a force desire is, and what an instrument for the fulfilment of desire is the imagination. This is the stuff of the earlier novels. Contrast an equally cunning opening to a later lecture: "Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I give you a particular pleasure - I might say a peculiar pleasure - to address you today in Germany, home of exact scholarship, because it was a German reference book which announced my death in 1957." The writer's cunning is here used to make us applaud him for his humour, insult his audience and point out the extent of his fame. It's a queer mixture, and it is in this vein, it seems to me, that the last two novels are largely written.

This volume is fascinating then because it gives us a glimpse of two Goldings. The pieces about place, about Homer, about fairy-tales, convey the power of his imagination, his extraordinary ability to enter into and convey to us the strangeness and incomprehensibility of the world we live in. The lectures on the other hand, give us a glimpse of the writer turning into a monument, not graciously but unthinkingly. It is sad to think that it is we, the reading public, the academic institutions, who have done this to someone who has given us so much. Let us hope it is not irreparable damage we have done. "It is a fine thing to be able to write to an author while he is still alive. If you are still alive will you answer these questions?" wrote a little boy to Golding recently. I very much hope the answer to that question is yes, but it's by no means a foregone conclusion.

Two bibliographical checklists of William Golding's writing and criticism of it, seven interviews with the novelist, one special issue of a periodical devoted to his work, seventy-five general studies in books or journals and 106 critical articles on individual novels of Golding's (up to and including *The Inheritors*) are listed in the seven-page section on him in *The English Novel: Twentieth Century Criticism*, Volume Two, *Penguin's Century Novels*, edited by Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter (380pp. Swallow/Ohio University Press. £21.00 8040 0424 2). Similar comprehensive citations are given, covering 1900-1975, for eighty novelists from H. G. Wells to Margaret Drabble.



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commentary

Overcoming the obstacle race

Krzysztof Z. Cieszkowski

The Women's Art Show 1550-1970
Nottingham Castle Museum

The Women's Art Show covers more than four centuries, stopping just short of the present. The decision to stop at 1970 was a wise one, since the art of the last decade, produced under the direct or remote influence of the Women's Movement, represents a significant change in the way women artists have regarded themselves and their work and their position within established contexts and structures, and none of this could have been given adequate expression in terms of a handful of works coming at the end of so comprehensive an exhibition.

Even so, an exhibition of 130 works crowded together in a fairly inhospitable setting in a provincial museum cannot hope to be the last word on the subject; rather, this impressive and important exhibition (which may be seen until August 1) must be regarded as a beginning, as an initial attempt at putting together a selection of paintings that will give visual expression to the arguments put forward in books by Greer, Sutherland Harris and Nochlin, Parker and Pollock.

With limited resources, the organizers have necessarily had to accept a number of restrictions—all the works in the exhibition are from British collections, public and private, and the attempt to represent foreign art stops at 1800—artists such as Sofonisba Anguissola, Artemisia Gentileschi and Judith Leyster, who have been

retrieved from undeserved obscurity through the efforts of feminist art historians in the past decade, are represented in the exhibition, but a host of European and American women artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose presence in such an exhibition is essential, artists like Vigée Le Brun, Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Käthe Kollwitz, Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keeffe, do not appear. So there is an imbalance—there is a European context up to the end of the eighteenth century, and then we are dealing only with British artists, with all that that implies, particularly as far as the twentieth century is concerned. One can reproach the organizers for not advertising this sufficiently.

Obvious questions arise: if one did not know that all the works in the exhibition were by women, is there

anything in the works themselves that might suggest the fact? Or, more particularly, do the paintings differ in any perceptible way from those in a parallel exhibition that would take in works by both men and women, or by just men artists? Preconceptions—that motherhood and domestic preoccupations might be more prominent here than otherwise, that there might be fewer paintings of the female nude or of militaristic or industrial scenes—are not borne out by the exhibition, and if there is one thing to be learned from it, it is that women's art (at least, up to 1970) is not a thing apart, a separate genre or outlying territory of any sort, but that the most valid way of looking at it is as art that has been produced by women.

Inevitably, a high proportion of the artists represented are the daughters or sisters of better-known men artists—Frances Reynolds, Anna Alma-Tadema, Catherine and Lucy Madox Brown, Emma Sandys, Mary Severn, Rebecca Solomon. The three introductory essays to the valuable catalogue, by Jennifer Fletcher, Pamela Gerrish Nunn and Jeremy Hunt, chart the problems that women artists have faced and overcome in the past, and that must be borne in mind when looking at their work—problems of education, of acceptance by the academies and salons as well as by society in general. These are still being unearthed and studied.

occasional commissions for chip shop murals and a one-man show in Dunoon.

Lucille (played with nervy intensity by Elaine Collins), unable to escape these twin flames, flutters from the one to the other spreading rancour between them. Impenetrable fog fills the Traverse cockpit (defying the ventilation system for about fifteen minutes) as *Still Life* opens in a graveyard.

David Hayman, with ten years' acting experience at Glasgow Citizens Theatre, has seen the need to inspire his cast with stage movement analogous to the lines they speak whilst not distracting attention from them. The pace of each play appreciably speeds up in the case of *Still Life* reaching a hectic pitch where the actors are required to tumble like circus clowns. In general the new productions are a triumph for the combined inventiveness of director and cast, with Billy McColl and Gerard Kelly taking the laurels for their charismatic performances as Phil and Spanky. On July 24 you can see the trilogy right through, starting at 2.30. It's worth arriving a few weeks early for the Festival just for this.

What needs complaints?

By Henry Popkin

A Think Piece
Circle Repertory Company, New York

When he writes for the stage Jules Feiffer is no longer the outrageous social satirist of such memorable absurdist fantasies as *Little Murders*, *God Bless*, *The White House Murder Case*, and *Knock Knock*. Only a few years ago he could show us the whole city of New York going up in gunsmoke (in *Little Murders*) or Joan of Arc paying a surprise visit to a pair of ageing Jewish intellectuals (in *Knock Knock*), but he has now banished such flights of fancy. Instead, he prefers to create realistic settings and thrust into the centre of them harried individuals who bear more than a passing resemblance to the neurotic complainants in his weekly cartoons. The first play by the new Feiffer, seen on Broadway only a few months ago, was *Grownups*, in which a capable journalist breaks away from his domineering parents and his colourless wife. A second study of family anguish, *A Think Piece*, has now opened at the Circle Rep.

A Think Piece is less vivid than *Grownups* because some potentially interesting characters have been diminished so as not to distract us from the contra-stage complainant who is pitiful but not very dynamic or interesting. It is one thing to spend a few minutes each week following a Feiffer character through eight panels of woe but quite another to watch this mad but mediocre housewife for nearly

two hours. Acting on admirable feminist principles, Feiffer apparently set out to correct an imbalance in the confrontation between the sexes in *Grownups*. The housewife-complainant of *A Think Piece* seems to be developed from two supporting figures in the previous play—the journalist's colourless wife and his sister, who feels eclipsed by his fame. To help us focus on her, Feiffer reduces the husband's spiritual side, making him an everlastingly genial school teacher. The housewife's successful sister, a stockbroker, is equally dim because she gets no chance to act out her success, except for a set piece on a man who sells replicas of worthless stock certificates as *objets d'art*.

The poor housewife is patronized by her cheerful husband, outlasted by her efficient older sister, sidestepped even by her more malleable younger sister (whom she wants, incomprehensibly, to take on as a literary collaborator) and gets no more satisfaction out of her two daughters: she cannot communicate with one of them, and the other obeys her so automatically that her allegiance is not worth much. What is equally frustrating, she does not get much of a plot to dominate. After presiding over her annual birthday dinner for her younger sister, she competes for the privilege of giving next year's dinner, and gives it, only to find that even her glamorous job in Alaska. It is enough to drive a housewife mad.

But we are not yet at the heart of *A Think Piece*. Neither the plot nor the characterization has sufficient weight to keep this play from blowing away. Aristocratic, maintaining the precedence

of plot over character, would have been surprised to find a play's centre of gravity in a third element—small talk. Feiffer has proclaimed that the play is about trivia and "that these petty details are what drive us crazy". Except for one long passage of efficient housekeeping set to Bach, it is small talk that conveys the trivia. The wife meditates on dinner menus, she wonders (dropping names as she goes) if indifferent Journalism would be better for her than the good fiction she reads, the family dodges the duty of walking the dog (which usually devolves on mother), and it is argued that shopping has become the central occupation of our lives and that the store is actually our state. The broker's monologue on dead stock certificates is typical in its effect. It gets its first laughs from nostalgia and irony at the expense of proud enterprises that have gone the way of Ozymandias, but, once we learn that the documents are being sold as art, we perceive a jab at modern art and at our mania for collecting. The story and its participants are pale in comparison. The two visiting sisters have no private lives, and the husband is no more distinctive (except for his obligatory rebellion at the end), but the wife is overburdened with complaints, if not with characteristics.

Under Caymichael Patton's direction, the actors deliver Feiffer's comments on society with zest; when, however, they are being merely human, they run the risk of substituting visceral excitement where interpretation is lacking. At least, Ann Sachs is smartly authoritative, as the broker, Andrew Duncan manages the right bumbling geniality for the husband, and Debra Mooney, playing the wife, flourishes her neuroses boldly.

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When in 1917 J. R. R. Tolkien began to write his stories of Middle Earth, he did so with the intention of creating a mythology for the English, apparently on the assumption that they did not already have one; which was true, if "mythology" is assumed to imply Asgard or Olympus. But in fact his enterprise was begun at the heyday of a very powerful myth that was entirely peculiar to the English. It involved neither gods nor giants, but prefects, housemasters, bullies and new boys. In 1917 it was exactly sixty years old, and it had already probably had more direct effect on the character of England than the Eddas did on Iceland.

One perfectly sensible verdict on the English school story is that never has so much been written by so many about so little. Anyone bothering to turn the pages of even a dozen of what Isabel Quigly in *The Helms of Tom Brown* calls "the central school story"—the type of novel created by Talbot Baines Reed, which flourished in the period before and just after the First World War—will wonder all those authors (Harold Avery, Gunby Hadath, Hyton Cleaver, handfuls more) had the nerve to repeat what was effectively the same plot again and again, year after year. The new boy arrives at the great public school, tries to make his mark, takes a wrong turning and nearly goes to the bad, is rescued just in time, and eventually becomes an outstanding sixth-former. If it was written once it was written a thousand times, and future generations will surely wonder why.

But there is, really, no great mystery about it. Those who attended English public schools as late as 1960 inhabited a world not very far removed from that of Tom Brown: a world of unspeakable food, vast freezing dormitories, homosexual intrigue, extraordinary rules (both official and unofficial), endless compulsory games, and not infrequent beatings. Among the staff there were the stock characters of school stories: the hairy-tweedy games types, the sadists, the downtrodden, the aesthetes who scarcely seemed to belong there, the bluff chaplains who loved to talk about sexual problems. It was all just as it had been since *The Loom of Youth*, since *Stalky*, even since *Eric*.

Looking back, one does not find the whole thing entirely credible. It is rather as C. S. Lewis observed of his



The bully Flashman is defeated by Tom and East in Tom Brown's School days.

time in the trenches of the First World War: "It is too cut off from the rest of my experience and often seems to have happened to someone else."

The comparison between the public schools and the Great War is often made. Isabel Quigly shrewdly observes that the war was the very thing for which the schools had unconsciously been preparing their boys for generations. And, she says, no school story should have a sequel carrying its hero into adult life; far better that he should die a brave death the moment the curtain has fallen on his last term. Feiffer provided the nearest ending of all. Even more significantly, the experience of boarding-school itself became a kind of Homeric conflict in the memories of those who went through it. *Stalky's* clever manoeuvres against the natives on the North West Frontier are merely a replay of his schoolboy outrages against the despised master, King. In Auden's words:

The Great War had begun: but masters' scrutiny
And lists of big boys were the war to us...

And Auden's generation, though they were the first who claimed openly to despise their public schools, drew again and again on the school myth in their verse and prose.

Some day, somebody will probably write a study of the influence of the public schools on the English literary imagination. Isabel Quigly could surely do it very well indeed. But she hasn't yet tried: *The Helms of Tom Brown* is simply an amble through the history of the school story. "Simply" is scarcely fair, because her book is far

captain) remarking that he'd rather win school matches than get a Balliol scholarship. Thus was most of Arnold's good work laid waste. Predictably, Eric gets less blame: after all, it had few imitators, and Dean Farrar (as Quigly observes) wrote better than Hughes. A chapter, of course, has to be devoted to *Stalky*, and the old controversy about its brutality is aired again, with the wise conclusion that the book is brutal and is good.

The early stuff is got out of the way briskly by Quigly; too briskly, for her statement that "the school story was born with Thomas Hughes" simply isn't true. It existed for more than a century before *Tom Brown*. The first full-length work of English children's fiction, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess, or Little Female Academy* (1749), is set in Mrs Teachum's private school for girls, and though its author chose the school setting chiefly as a frame in which to put a number of moral tales told by the girls, their squabbles with each other take up quite a lot of space, and are a recognizable precursor of Angela Brazil. Then there are Charles and Mary Lamb's *Mrs Leicester's School* (1809), an imitation of *The Governess*, and Harriet Martineau's *The Crofton Boys* (1841), not a bad story about a boys' boarding school, and the Revd William Adams's *The Cherry Stones* (1815), a tale of guilty conscience in another establishment for boys, and a handful more, including stories by Maria Edgeworth (who knew a thing or two about boarding-schools from her own experience), and the intriguingly titled but otherwise uninteresting *First Going to School; or, the Story of Tom Brown and his Sisters* (1804), by Dorothy Kilner—did Hughes know of it?

What Hughes did in 1857 was not to invent the school story, or even to create the archetypal plot (the Martineau and Adams stories have a good deal of resemblance to *Tom Brown*), but to attach to it his own muscular Christian ethic, which thereafter served it very well. Talbot Baines Reed then modified this—as he put it himself, taking out the powder which Hughes had mixed with the jam—and from his *Fifth Form at St Dominic's* (first printed as a serial in 1881-2) the way was open for any old hack to turn out a clutch of school yarns. Self-parody entered the genre very early, as Quigly points out: not just in *Mike* and the other school stories by the apprentice P. G. Wodehouse (to which Quigly rightly devotes several pages), but in such curiosities as Desmond Coke's *The Bowling of a Twig* (1906), which tries, quite unsuccessfully, to show how

different "real" school life is from the books. Charles Hamilton (alias Frank Richards), Owen Conquest, Martin Clifford, et al) capitalized on this self-parodying tendency, and in his *Greyfriars* and St Jim's stories produced school tales of such patent absurdity of plot (*Greyfriars Against the Camibals!* is one *Magnet* title) that Quigly rightly uses the word "surrealistic" of them.

If Quigly's book is short-weight on the ancestors of Tom Brown, it is a little skimpy in its treatment of some of his heirs, too. Fair enough to exclude most of the Talbot Baines Reed imitators (or give them no more than a passing mention), on the grounds that the books they wrote are indistinguishable from one another, but there could have been a little attention paid to such oddities as Nelson Lee, the detective turned schoolmaster, and to the whole sub-genre of critical and outrageous goings-on at the unbelievable schools featured in *Hotsprings* and the other D. C. Thomson story-papers from the 1920s onwards. It becomes apparent, in fact, that Quigly really only wants to write at length about one kind of school story: what she calls the "serious" school novel, though "anti-school" would be just as good a label. Here *The Helms of Tom Brown* comes into its own, with long and entertaining discussions of Hugh Walpole's *Mr Fernin* and *Mr Trull* and Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth*, both of which had the unfortunate result of making their authors a reputation with which they could never keep up; and there is a good deal about G. F. Bradby's *The Lanchester Tradition* (1913), an allegory about the decay of the Arnold influence, which, from Quigly's description, sounds fascinating and in need of reissue. Quigly also gives proper space to that oddity, the public school love story (all-male), which, flourishing in the 1890s and a little after, was able to include torrid love-scenes without the authors realizing what they were writing about:

"You—you like me better than any other fellow in the school?"
"Yes; better than any other fellow in the world."
"Is it possible?"
"I have always felt that way since—yes—since the very first minute I saw you."

This is from H. A. Vachell's *The Hill*, published as late as 1905, by which time one would have thought that the Wilde scandal ruled out such things.

Quigly accepts unquestioningly, as do most writers about modern children's fiction, that the school story is now dead. Certainly the post-1945

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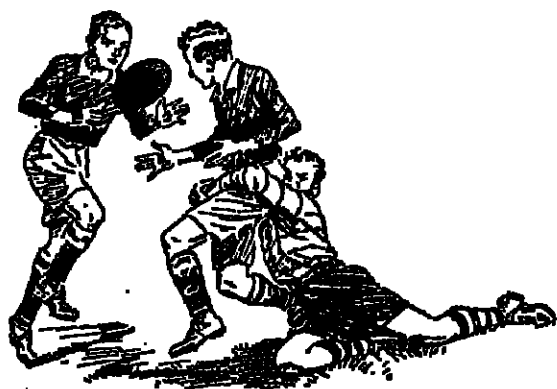
Bodley Head



attempts to adapt the genre to a world of day schools have not often been successful – though books like K. M. Peyton's *Pennington's Seventeenth Summer* (1979) remind us that you don't have to be a boarder to be in permanent conflict with the staff. But Anthony Buckeridge's *Jeanie* series, published over the last three decades, shows not the slightest sign of *rigor mortis*, while the facsimile *Magnets* issued by the Howard Baker company show that Bunter still has thousands of admirers, even if most of them are rather long in the tooth. More seriously, the postwar years have seen that masterpiece by William Mayne *A Swam in May* (1955), a brilliant evocation of choir-school life, while

two of the best contemporary English children's authors have made use of the school setting, albeit in an idiosyncratic way – Leon Garfield in *The Strange Affair of Adelaide Harris*, and Jane Gardam in *A Long Way from Verona*, both published in 1971. Tom Brown may have few direct heirs still living, but the more distant branches of the family seem to be flourishing.

Finally, three tibbits from Quigly's pages. Did you know that Eric Blair (George Orwell) was named after Farrar's *Eric*? That Kim Philby's first name was taken from Kipling's boy spy? And that, in the pages of a pre-1914 P. G. Woodhouse school story, there are a pair of cricketers called Burgess and (sic) MacLain?



An illustration from *The Heirs of Tom Brown* by Isabel Quigly, which is reviewed above.

Horrid tales

Edward Blishen

JOAN AIKEN
A Whisper in the Night
Gollancz, £5.95.
0 575 0310 5 0

I see an ominous sort of clearing in the literary forest, and a hut in it. There's someone sitting in the small garden, typing at an amazing pace. Gothic Tales Written While You Wait, says a neat notice on a pole. Keeping the kind of careful distance that characters in her stories don't (almost all of them being rooted in some simple absence of caution, some tendency to rush into plainly haunted valleys or obviously untrustworthy sorts of graveyard), I become quickly convinced that the typist is Joan Aiken. No one I can think of turns out more agreeable little horrid tales. A reviewer once spoke of her trade, or this corner of it, as the chilling of teenage spines. My spine is much older than that, but she can always bring about some reduction in its temperature.

There are (of course) thirteen "stories of horror, suspense and fantasy" in *A Whisper in the Night*. Some are simple tales of revenge, of a fairly stark and full-blooded kind. So the punishment of the unpleasant maths teacher, Miss Evans, is nothing less than death brought about, in some manner best thought of as a sort of gurgling, by Old Philkin, who's defined by a vague suggestion of hopping and stopping and who might be, but probably isn't, a hairy frog with the texture of a rotten pear. Relief will be given by this story to any imaginative child beset by any unimaginative instructor. Indeed, fantasies of justified punishment carried out by barely definable agents make up a large part of the volume. Joan Aiken has a gift for inventing such agents: it lies in her ability to suggest a hideously specific vagueness. In one story a beastly husband gets his come-uppence from an emanation more beastly than himself: it's a sort of bear, but in fact the whole environment, the entire atmosphere, becomes furiously, crushingly bearish. There's also much use of the idea of an apparently good thing turning into a startlingly bad one: for example, *The Finder*, a metal image that certainly helps an odious schoolboy to track down small treasures that have been fished from him, but also finds him: which amounts to his being extracted from the world of the living by way of an impossibly tiny lavatory window.

Occasionally a tale is clearly beyond

anyone's power to carry it off, and yet somehow is carried off. "Miss Spitfire", for example, which involves our believing, however briefly and in whatever context of a readiness not to require things to be particularly probable, that Uncle Ned might at his own request be taken out in his bed onto a runway on the old wartime aerodrome, in a thunderstorm, in order to die. The children ensure that his transitor goes with him, providing him with the music he likes – "Sharpchord pieces with names like The Knitters, and The Grape Barricadeers, and The Mysterious Knitters". As in this detail, a wild kind of surrealism works because it is all so busily deadpan. On the storyteller's own face there's not a twitch of amazement. In another tale an Indian doctor of philosophy, adrift in a boat with (of course) a famous ill-mannered sculptor, a lady in advertising and the author of an *Advice to Readers* column in the *New York Review of Life*, chooses to take the sculptor with him when he (of course) climbs up a rope and vanishes. The sculptor soon re-appears, having taken furiously against the hereafter ("while-essed halo-creepers"), and the three remaining castaways settle down to decide who should eat whom. Ridiculous; yet it has the robust plausibility of the most level-headed sort of realism.

It's partly the world of Harry Graham. The dying Uncle Ned and his small relatives discuss in some detail the disposal of his ashes. He'd like them to be turned to use in an egg timer. The children point out that there might be altogether too much ash for this purpose. As it happens, the end of the story provides so much miscellaneous human debris that the question of separating out Uncle Ned's nastiness is *terribly* nasty, and the general envelope of cheerfulness in which most of the stories are contained simply isn't present. That's so in the tale of an evil child whose aides are a pair of gloves that walk about on their thumbs and fingers. They're curiously horrid to think of, those gloves, returning from some malign mission "slightly soiled and smeared".

And one story is completely over the top. It's about a child who can't wonder and wonder what her fear is: death. And she dies. It has the bleak beauty of some of the darkest tales of a predecessor (and neighbour in the literary forest) that Joan Aiken sometimes reminds one of: Hans Andersen.

The telling of stories

Margaret Meek

WILLIAM MAYNE
All the King's Men
Cape, £5.95.
0 244 02026 9

After nearly thirty years of tantalizing his readers and putting his critics through their paces, William Mayne challenges us again. Here are three stories that not only help to develop our view of literature for children but also extend the reader's understanding of the reading act itself. Mayne is a fabulist, a storyteller who takes pleasure in the design of his narratives and attempts to find more "subtle" correspondences between the reality that is fiction and the fiction that is reality.

Mayne demands of all his readers both patience and tolerance, slowing down their interaction with his texts so that they can keep pace with the consciousness of his characters:

I am not lost. I know where I am. I don't know where I am in that's all... The two places she thought of being in were Granny's kitchen and her own kitchen, but she was somewhere between, and they were calling her. Lost is where you don't know where. Here is. It is something to do with here, not something to do with yourself.

I'm not lost. This place doesn't know where it is.

We recognize a Mayne character in Kirsty, who makes her way with two cats in a blizzard to her granny's, on a day that has already included the death of another cat and her grandfather's taking to his bed in a sorrowful dudgeon that has spread ill-temper about the house. The "Stone Ray" of the story's title is also the ancient pile of stones at the top of the fell which is a Kirsty's grandfather says, "pushed" him as a boy to the farmhouse where the family now lives. The Ray ("the straight line of radiant energy") is used by Kirsty as a sight-line too when she meets a witch-figure in the snow and has to deal with the shape it takes in her imagination. The reader knows what is happening, but is urged to relinquish a hold on the real and take on the child's clearer perception of the truth.

Curdling the blood

Geoffrey Trease

GILLIAN CROSS
The Dark Behind the Curtain
Oxford, £5.95.
0 197 21457 0

VIVIAN ALCOCK
The Sylvia Game
Methuen, £5.50.
0 416 21930 6

In the child's critical vocabulary "scary" ranks high among the accolades. Gillian Cross promises well from her first page, with a schoolboy actor's macabre portrayal of Sweeney Todd – and, let it be said at once, she delivers generously thereafter. The famous melodrama is being rehearsed by Miss Lampeter, a dedicated follower of fashionable theories. She knows all about "total involvement", which she tirelessly and all too tediously demands from her pupils, but she has not the common sense to realize the imprudence of allowing her juvenile demon barbers to wield his grandfather's actual cut-throat razor on stage.

This lad, the clever and monstrous Marshall, dominates the stage, at once popular, admired and feared, whereas poor Jackus, school misfit and suspected pilferer, is a reluctant participant, foisted upon a hostile cast for actively remedial and non-artistic reasons. Mysterious occurrences punctuate the rehearsal. Perils fly through the air, private possessions vanish, rows of library books cascade from their shelves, pots of scenic paint spill and spread across the floor, lunch

In "Boy to Island" Colin visits the island of Faransay, with its rituals of legend and lore. When he forgets the old piper's warning not to disturb the inhabitants with his novice piping, we know that fairy-tale retribution will follow. The tale has a powerful atmosphere; the reader seems to be offered, even physically, its symbolic properties.

How long they stood it was not possible to tell. They felt as if they had always been there. Then across them came the darkness of the rising, falling moon of that place, spinning and glittering bleakly. And when the darkness had gone they were alone, though together, and out of the gathering of fairs.

The effect of the scenery on the characters is evoked by means of pauses and the use of words such as "bleakly". The reader moves directly to the reaction which is appropriate to the region (all Mayne's stories have inner as well as outer landscapes). The atmosphere in this story seems to recall George MacDonald, as if Mayne were linking his tale to an earlier kind of telling. Perhaps this is how the modern fabulist presents to his readers the continuity of the older, orally derived conventions of time and place in literature, conventions they may not otherwise encounter in these days of realistic fiction.

Passages like this divide Mayne's readers into those who are following where his eye leads, and others whose patience will not last a page. Adults, whose judgment of books for children depends on a swift predictable read of "relevant" plot or theme may be unwilling to admit that children, whose discovery of reading against the expected fall of the phrase. Those who do take the time the text needs to discover in Mayne a kind of reading that is a fusion of means and ends, the literary reading that you must do for yourself. And here I think, as Mayne stretches his story to a gossamer thinness and spins out "what happens next", he risks losing all but his most devoted readers in a maze of left-braining sentences and continuous tenses. The Celtic lit is more affected than affecting to the inexperienced. Even the competent young who read everything have too little time for the re-readings that

reveal the layers of crafting and the "seeing".

The first story on the book "All the King's Men" is quite unexpected in its impact. It seems to have no gaps in the text; all is activity, comings and goings. It is as if Mayne, usually so slow, is showing a turn of speed to shake us out of our preconceptions. Here he exchanges his oblique impressionism for an imitative realism that leaves nothing out. Five dwarfs in the service of a medieval king, whose wife, their protector, has died precede him to his winter hunting palace where they suffer hunger and indignities that outrage their man-sized anger and appetites. When the King appears, it is clear he will marry the red Burgundian Queen who has dwarfs of her own. In the end, however, the dwarfs teach their betters how to behave, as in the best fables, ancient and modern.

The tale moves at the rate of the intrigue. The reader is dealt a full hand of cards and has to learn new rules of the story game. (One of the interior secrets of the story is the card-game the dwarfs play.) Yet the pace of the narrative is another illusion. Mayne so thickens the text that I, for one, read even more slowly, as the dwarf narrator assumes a point of view the reader has to learn to see from.

Roberto, up on the horse with me, was out of the basket at once, had the very stone the youth had shied, and flung it back, hard, fast, and straight into the still-open laughing mouth. Roberto was at the horse's tail and hauling himself up and into the basket before the youth looked up again after spitting out broken teeth and retching up the stone from his gullet.

It works like Picasso's repainting of Velasquez's "Las Meninas", a crowded canvas of stories within the story, the fabulist's delight in the conventions and boundaries of his craft, to be extended or broken as his skill can devise. Mayne's layering of courtly romance brings storytelling for old and young together again, a game of humour and high seriousness that redefines "literature" as what readers can be taught by writers to read. However we interpret what Mayne does, there is no mistaking his skill in teaching his readers, as the best fabulists have always done, the nature of the art he practises.

sandwiches are disgustingly nibbled by unknown teeth. Jackus seems to be the other children the obvious culprit. Only the reader knows his innocence, and, as the author piles on the spoonfuls and suspense – culminating with a naked footprint in the paint – is led to the inescapable conclusion that these are true psychic phenomena. Marshall has become, so totally involved, so convincing an incarnation of bygone evil, that he has stirred up not one poltergeist but a whole pack of restless spirits of exploited Victorian children.

Gillian Cross has a practised eye hand at producing a delicious frisson. She can curdle the blood and at the same time, paradoxically, send it racing through the veins as the apprehension gathers. Everything is concentrated into a well-wrought plot, a handful of vividly-drawn characters, and a unity of setting, oppressively enclosed. Quite deliberately, one home background, and even the type of school, apart from a mention of homework and blazers. This, the young reader is meant to feel, with a nervous glance over his shoulder, could be happening anywhere.

By contrast Vivian Alcock, no less adept at evoking the uncanny, as she demonstrated last year, with that strange, uncomfortably unforgettable nightmare, *The Stonewalkers*, has this time preferred to end with a rational explanation for all the odd incidents she has woven into her story. What, constantly wonders, explains the chilled spine? Is it because, as is often suggested, their own lives are so full of fears and insecurities that they find reassurance in fictional horrors which the characters survive? Insecurity is the

factor common to these two very different books. In *The Sylvia Game* we have Emily, child of a feeble painter, haunted first by her dread of bills and balliffs, and then by a new fear that her unsuccessful father is turning to art forgery. Equally insecure are her two holiday acquaintances, Oliver at the big house with his own bullying father, and Kevin the boy at her hotel, with other complicated uncertainties.

This book too opens with great vitality. It has gusto and humour to provide welcome relief from the sombre recurrent hints of the paranormal. Miss Alcock is unsentimental, but there is an unmistakable depth of feeling in her deft handling of her very human and imperfect characters. She is writing of fear and courage, exploring the ambivalent relationships of parent and child, boy and girl, boy and boy. The contemporary juvenile dialogue rings true, and there is felicity in the descriptive phrasing.

The Library Association has recently presented its awards for children's books. *The Carnegie Medal*, for an outstanding book for children written in English, has been awarded to Robert Westall for his novel *The Scarecrows* (Chatto and Windus). Also nominated for this award were *Bridge and William* and *The Hollow Land* by Jane Gardam (both published by Julia MacRae Books) and *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian (Kestrel). The Kate Greenaway Medal, for an illustrated book, was given to *The Highwayman* by Charles Keeping (Oxford University Press). Other nominations were *The Patchwork Cat* by Nicola Bayley, *Hansel and Gretel* by Anthony Browne and *Sunshine* by Jan Ormerod.

Self-discoveries

Alan Brownjohn

IAN STRACHAN
The Soutar Retrospective
Oxford, £5.95.
0 19 271464 3

Now she is sixteen years old and her O levels are conveniently over, Kate Soutar can decide for herself, and take up her artist father's invitation to go to Cornwall and help with his retrospective exhibition if she wants to. Kate's home is a tenth floor flat in a tower block, where there is not much romance; and her experience is limited by the watchful eyes of a too-protective mother. These parents, Jane and Dan, have been divorced (nothing more colourful than sheer incompatibility) for almost as long as she can remember. To see Dan Soutar properly again will be for Kate a voyage of discovery.

Kate has to be introspective and diffident, and yet capable of resolution, which makes for some awkwardness in the plotting. *The Soutar Retrospective* goes at a fairly leisurely pace through some more believable, and some less believable, incidents once she has arrived in the small Cornish resort where the important retrospective is, somewhat improbably, to be mounted. Kate is, in turn, shocked by her father's image with the sophisticated Céline, scarcely older than herself, amused by the good-hearted David (unkindling with old cars between A level and university), mystified by Sir Henry, David's wealthy yet pebbled father, who runs the art gallery, and carried off her feet by Rod, a slightly too bizarre king of the local rocks. But she learns to find her own latent strengths. Ian Strachan's aim appears to be to demonstrate a convincing – and a consoling – process of self-discovery in

his adolescent heroine.

The novel is a brave attempt to reconcile, for "older children", a mature adult capacity to stand back and judge Kate's handling of her dilemmas (the authorial overview) with the real attractions of the dangerous peer group into which she is swept against her will (concession to the readers). This is a tricky balance to keep; but the understanding, here, of an adolescent grappling intelligently, in infinite self-doubt, with the complex surprises of both an adult and a teenage culture, is more than usually subtle.

The relative suddenness of the revelation is credible: by the end, Kate has realized that the past may be discarded and the future faced with a fuller knowledge both of life and of herself. And yet the narrative path to this sensible conclusion follows a tortuous and unlikely route.

One fault in the book is its very ambitiousness. Mr Strachan gives the impression of wanting to write a moral implication out of almost every carefully-introduced character and episode. The point about loss, loneliness and human interdependence did not require to be underlined so often, nor was there a need to set Kate in so many uneasy dialogues where candid self-assessment is so thoroughly – and banally – pursued. Worse, the succession of contrived exits and entrances by which characters are manoeuvred into the right place at the right time, and a garishly melodramatic climax from which everyone recovers much too quickly and completely, are so implausible as to undermine the message of the story. *The Soutar Retrospective* might appeal, as was no doubt intended, to teenage readers caught between divided parents. Its helpfulness to them will depend on whether they can overlook the weaknesses in the plot and characterization of this honest and well-meaning, yet oddly clumsy, novel.

Glimpses of the void

Sarah Hayes

ROBERT WESTALL
Break of Dark
Chatto and Windus, £5.50.
0 7011 2624 0

A curious gap exists between novels written specifically for teenagers and those intended for adult consumption – a gap too often filled with the cotton-wool of George Heyer and Agatha Christie or nannies of the alien, Dennis Wheatley kind. The sinister ingenuity of tale-tellers such as Roald Dahl and Ray Bradbury can attract many readers who have come to an end of "young adult" books; and it is perhaps short stories that most efficiently bridge the teenage gulf.

In his first collection of stories, Robert Westall (author of the prizewinning *The Scarecrows*) shows himself a master of the art of creating eerie presences that can intrude into the sunlight of an ordinary day. His title *Break of Dark* is significant, for in each of the five stories something is heard, seen, or felt to have broken loose from its dark resting place. That is all the stories have in common, for the nature of the breakout are all quite distinct.

In the first story a fell walker finds a beautiful girl with an uncanny nose for money. She makes him a millionaire, using him in return as a stud. In three months she gives birth to golden telebots, and his job done, attempts to kill him. Instead she drives herself, the babies, and a million pounds over a cliff: a population explosion of an alien master race has been held in check, for the moment.

The uneasy friendship of two couples with differing life styles turns to horror when a joke post card calls from the dead a trio of disagreeable relatives. First it is just the smell of Fred, Alice and Auntie Loo, then the sound of asthmatic breathing. It becomes clear that these interlopers are the manifestation of an

unconscious hatred that exists between the two husbands. The reluctant compassion of one only just saves the life of the other and exorcise the ghosts of an unhappy childhood. Another story with more than a whiff of M. R. James about it concerns a keen modern young vicar whose city-centre church is empty of worshippers, except on the night the verger goes to the door of the crypt to admit the congregation.

The longest and most substantial story – more the stuff of novels – is "Blackham's Wimpey", a fine description of the life of a Second World War Wellington bomber crew. The tale is told in the argot of the wireless op – at once dispassionate and frenetic. The desperate need for family relations within a group of men confronting death in every move, the claustrophobia, panic and terror that lie behind the major banter, the hysteria that hovers over night-flying – all contribute to the horror of the death of a Junkers pilot whose screams continue to haunt the intercom of Blackham's Wellington. Each time S-sugar goes out, the events of Lieutenant Gehlen's flame-consuming death are re-run over the radio, and the plane returns unmarked bearing a crew that is crazed, dead, or at the least utterly demoralized. Gehlen dead destroys more men than ever he did alive.

Robert Westall's robust style and settings have a solidity about them that makes the intrusion from the dark all the more uncomfortable. His final story concerns Sergeant Niles, an undemanding sea-front duty. When he tracks down mysterious deaths to a memorial horse trough which appears to absorb objects left in it, he knows he will be the laughing stock of the force. The sergeant makes futile attempts to destroy the horse trough, but his dreams are invaded by slivery aliens and his waking by a great shooting star. "You should have left us alone," he mutters. "Graymouth's not your sort of place. It's a family resort."

The façade of stolid reality and the familiar politeness of ordinary people first, occasionally cracks to afford a glimpse of the void. Mr Westall is quick to plaster over the crack, but the dark fingers on.

Father figures

Jennifer Moody

JACQUELINE WILSON
Nobody's Perfect
Oxford, £5.95.
0 19 271463 5

TIM KENNEMORE
Wall of Words
Faber, £5.25.
0 571 11856 9

To lose one parent, said Lady Bracknell, may be regarded as a misfortune, but she made no distinction between the loss of a father and the loss of a mother. For a teenage girl, her relationship with her father can be one of the most formative in her life, and his absence may cause much grief. Both Sandra in *Nobody's Perfect* and Kim in *Wall of Words* have, in their different ways, to come to terms with this deprivation. It is interesting that both books take it for granted that it is better to have no father than a weak or inadequate one.

Nobody's Perfect is Jacqueline Wilson's first novel, but there is nothing tentative about her choice of theme. Sandra, her shy and awkward fifteen-year-old heroine, is illegitimate and has never known her father. Her mother, who had a hard time bringing Sandra up, has subsequently married the unlikely Stan and produced the apple of Stan's eye, Sandra's step-sister. From a few words of description of her real father, Sandra builds up a fantasy figure of sensitivity and erudition and dwells, with her writer's imagination, on the intimacy of the relationship they might have. Helped by Michael, a bright, pert sparrow of a thirteen-year-old, Sandra sets out over the summer holidays to track down her real father. Of course, she finds him to be cowardly, mendacious, and

uncreative – a middle-aged moneyed advertising executive; of course, having found him she can, and does, dismiss him.

Jacqueline Wilson writes with clarity and perception. She almost manages to overcome the problem of having a first-person heroine, who often behaves with teenage surliness and insensitivity, yet always perceives with tolerance and affection. By far the best part of this book is idiosyncratic Michael: oversized, overtrained, perky and pushy, he is a believable and, against the odds, completely likeable eccentric. That he is the right companion for Sandra, despite disparities of age and size, is soon heartwarming clear, and their bookish activities are entertaining and imaginative. Although the plot is not particularly original and the pace not always maintained, the characters are for the most part convincing and their perplexities real ones.

Wall of Words is Tim Kennemore's third novel, and is as different from her first two, *The Middle of the Sandwich* and *The Fortunate Few*, as they are unlike each other. More ambitious in scope, more complex in plot, *Wall of Words* is about a family of four daughters, the youngest seven-year-old Anna, Kerry, Frances and heroine Kim, the eldest, aged thirteen. Their confident, outgoing mother works to support them, as their father has moved away from the family while he writes a block-busting novel set in Russia. His daughters visit him from time to time and he them, if he remembers. Kim adores her father, sharing with him many interests and a turn of mind, and she looks forward to the time when the book will be completed and he will return home. The period of *Wall of Words* is the summer holidays. It is a time of events and discoveries: precocious Anna gets herself heard and heard on local radio; Kim's affectionate concern for

Kerry's school phobia is resolved when Kerry is diagnosed as dyslexic; finally, Kim becomes sadly aware that her father will never return. He has never completed anything in his life, cannot face responsibility and is not wanted back by his wife.

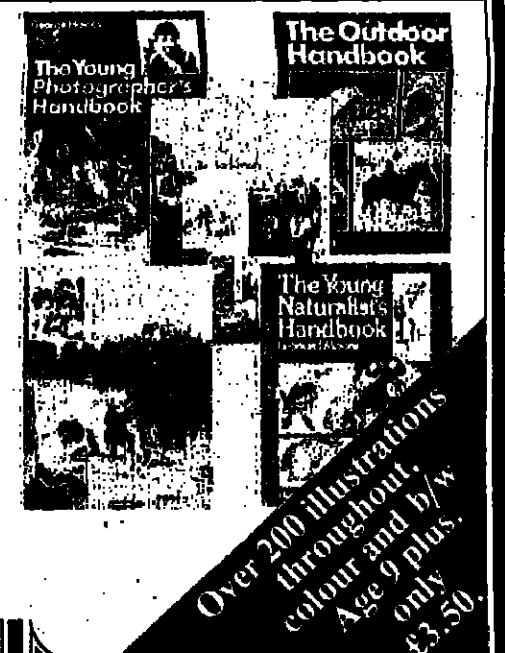
Ms Kennemore has a light and entertaining style, only occasionally marred by facetiousness, and she catches neatly the warmth and tensions of a close-knit family life. The monstrous Anna is perhaps treated with more tolerance than one might expect, but generally the girls wrangle and care for each other in a pleasantly recognizable fashion. The only factor that jars in an otherwise very enjoyable book is the conspicuousness of the "public information" content. For example, the symptoms and treatment of dyslexia, the need for respect as well as love in a relationship, the importance of not having children in order to cement an unstable marriage, are all spoken of in terms that do not seem appropriate to the person saying them. One has an uneasy feeling that one is being preached at, especially as, with the exception of Kerry's dyslexia, none of the didactic points made is in any way intrinsic to the plot. The reader may raise an eyebrow too at the apparent valuation of a genius-level IQ as nothing more than the means of coming second in class in all subjects with very little effort.

Young Writers 23rd Year (1980p, Heinemann, Paperback £2.95, 0 435 13412 4) contains thirty-three of the award-winning entries from the 1981 W. E. Smith Young Writers Competition. The competition, which was previously known as the Children's Literary Competition has been held annually since 1959. It invites poems, short stories and descriptive pieces from young writers under sixteen. This collection is illustrated by drawings and paintings by children.

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Beyond childhood Undiluted apprehension

David Rees

DAVID CHAMBERS
Dance on my Grave
Bodley Head, £4.25.
0 370 30366 0

The immediate questions that come to mind after reading this book are: for whom is it intended, and who is going to buy it? Like the same author's *Breaktime* it is, linguistically, an adult novel of some difficulty - a piece of verbal fireworks (Zindel on the subject of Salinger, anglicized, with touches of Dylan Thomas) that I, personally, found irritating and self-indulgent, though others will, no doubt, praise it as dazzling and breath-taking. No sixteen-year-old (it is a first-person narrative) ever spoke with such mature precision, so many apt literary quotations, so many felicitous puns: it is Aiden Chambers's voice, not that of his central character; who, incidentally, has the same voice as the second main character - no attempt is made in the dialogue to distinguish between Barry and Hal, whose speech is tiresomely unnatural, all clever repartee, quotes and bits of quotes and misplaced American-derived slang. It is likely to be beyond ninety-nine per cent of the teenage readers for whom it is presumably intended.

The subject matter is also a problem. It is the story of a love affair between two people of the same sex, and although there are some coy sexual euphemisms that a gay person would ever use, Aiden Chambers is not afraid to describe what happens in bed. Well, I thoroughly welcome a novel for and about homosexual or bisexual teenagers, because it is time this most ignored and taboo of subjects had a proper place in young adult literature. The middle section of the book is extremely well done. The intensity and

passion of Hal's feelings for and commitment to Barry are vivid and real, and equally convincing is Hal's rage and sense of let-down when he realizes that Barry has spent the night with a Norwegian au pair girl, that his lover wants something a lot more casual than he can offer. And good, too, is the fact that while writing about homosexual love the author does not neglect sex, (as Deborah Hautzig did in *Hey, Dollface!*) But the subject matter makes one wonder who is going to read this book? It should have a place on the shelves of every secondary school library, but I doubt very much that it will. Homosexuality still makes too many teachers wonder what the parents will think. My own novel *In the Tent* provides a useful illustration - not thought by any school library in Cornwall, in Somerset kept under lock key, in some London schools available only to sixth-formers. Yet it has sold pretty well in gay bookshops and through the mail order pages of *Gay News*. Which is probably what will happen to *Dance on my Grave*.

The rest of the novel is nothing like as good as the middle section. The minor characters are two-dimensional cut-outs or caricatures, and much of the storyline is wildly improbable. Hal disguised as a girl going to view Barry's corpse in the morgue - Barry, after the final quarrel, is killed in a motor-bike accident - and being unmasked, indeed, practically undressed in a fight with the morgue attendant, is one of many scenes that are way over the top. Buried somewhere in this book is an excellent novel, but, as in *Breaktime*, Aiden Chambers doesn't seem to understand the word excess. *Dance on my Grave* is all too often hysterical, at times feverish, in language and in incident a great pity, because with a more self-critical, cooler approach it could have been first-rate.

David Rees's *The Milkmaid's* on his way has recently been published by the Gay Men's Press £2.50. 0 907 040 12 8.

Patricia Craig

NINA BAWDEN
Kept in the Dark
Gollancz, £5.50.
0 575 03113 1

The domestic emergency, usually involving illness in a parent, is a standard device in juvenile fiction for getting the children of the family into an unanticipated setting where alarms and misadventures can suitably occur. The leading characters are often parked on eccentric relatives whom, due to some long-standing estrangement, they now meet for the first time. A runaway daughter, an unadvantageous marriage, and pig-headedness on the part of one or both her parents, will likely emerge, the causes of the family quarrel. The daughter, the mother of the present set of children, will have taken up with someone unsuitable, in the rigid parents' view, on account of his profession (artistic) and financial prospects (poor). She will have made her bed, and never regretted lying on it. Nothing but desperation will now bring her to ask a favour - child-minding - of the unrelenting old pair.

The grandparents, however, will prove less unrelenting than their behaviour over the years has suggested. It will be up to the children

to endear themselves to the standoffish old couple, in the interest of reconciliation and prospective emotional expansiveness. They may do this by means of cunning (though this particular trait has no credibility for a present-day readership), adaptability, resourcefulness or an unapologetic spirit. Whatever the requisite quality, they will manifest it in the course of coping with some further emergency or bother which afflicts the grandparents in their turn. Things, after some close shaves and unanticipated pickles, will end satisfactorily for everyone.

Nina Bawden, who took a different story-book plot (the father wrongly accused of theft) and used it to exceptionally good effect in *The Peppermint Pig*, now does the best she can with the unoriginal incidents outlined above. She has several advantages over earlier users of this particular plot - terseness, edginess, scorn for the highly artificial dangers to which children in books were traditionally exposed. The danger that looms over inoffensive Noel, stormy Clara and posing Bosie (who plays the baby and the family chef as it suits him) in *Kept in the Dark* is genuine enough, and the author makes no bones about communicating a thoroughly undiluted sense of apprehension, rising at another grandparent, David, a fat young man, stupid and to the point of psychopathy, who imposes himself on the household. David's threatening friendliness is not to be resisted. The

children, taken in at first, and guilty of some significant indiscretions, are soon pandering to their cousin's insane relish for happy family life - for the old people's sake, of course, as much as their own.

There are some inconsistencies in the book, and some implausibilities too. The grandparents are really less eccentric than unlikely (he gruff but not altogether unbending, she wizened and flighty) - and would they really have kept their daughter in ignorance, all her life, of the existence of her half-brother (David's father)? David is a satisfactorily frightening figure because of his unpredictability and constant need of placation; but we are kept quite in the dark about how he manages to survive on his own (his visits to his grandparents are relatively infrequent). Nina Bawden is too accomplished an author to write anything resembling "case-history" stories, but in this novel there are one or two gestures in that direction. "Social problems" fiction is all very well, but it is really necessary to lumber poor Bosie with so unpalatable a defect as thieving - safely in the past or not? ("I stopped stealing last year... On my birthday," he rather pertly announces). And did the author have to involve him in an escapade that verges on delinquency in order to effect a suitable outcome for her story? These are trifling obstacles in an exhilarating course, but they get in the way of complete enjoyment of the narrative.

Cultures on other terms

Dominic Hibberd

MALCOLM J. BOSSE
Ganesh
Chatto and Windus, £5.50.
0 7011 2621 3

As numerous exhibitions in Britain are at present reminding us, it is time we took India on her own terms. Inner strength is one of the things Indians believe they can teach us, but Hinduism is hard to take seriously at first; with its bizarre gods and infinite confusion. Malcolm Bosse's book offers a way of approach. Take Ganesh, for example, the fat, rather Platanian elephant-headed god; it is hard to believe that many Indians venerate this extraordinary figure. Yet he is the Overcomer of obstacles; a little reverence to him might be worth trying. It might even make the authorities route the new bypass through the hamburger drive-in instead of through Jeffrey's family

In some ways, *Ganesh* is a standard story about a fourteen-year-old loner who has to settle into a new school, but it has some interesting variations. The first third of the book is set in south India, where Jeffrey's American parents have devoted their lives to helping the poor. When the narrative opens, his mother is dead and his father is dying. There are informative descriptions of Indian life and customs, culminating in a grim cremation which Jeffrey insists on watching, an unconventional act which marks him out as an alien in the country he had believed to be his own. He then goes to America, where his aunt still lives in the old family house; the spiritual depth of India meets the strengths of the New World. With his Indian

mannerisms, he is regarded as an oddity at first, but by the time the threat to the house comes he has won a few friends. Under his trained guidance, they mount a hunger-strike, not a messy game it tends to be in the West but a discipline regulated by the principles of Yoga. The power which, according to Bosse, drove the British from India, proves strong enough to win this smaller battle.

This is an absorbing book, written without frills by an American who knows and respects India (the inappropriate mosque on the dust jacket may not be his fault). A Midwest high school kid who read it attentively would see himself in perspective and would get more than a glimpse of the philosophical riches of India. For British readers there is the bonus of encountering life in small-town America. Too many children's books condemn the materialism of modern culture and offer no alternative; this one neither condemns nor urges alternatives but brings the ancient message that strength comes from within, whatever culture you happen to belong to.

Partaking

Elaine Moss

MARY MELWOOD
The Watcher Bee
Deutsch £4.50.
0 233 974 32 6

Mary Melwood, as a writer for young people (following the extraordinary *Nettlewood*, which was published in 1974) confirms my belief that she is one of the most gifted authors to emerge in the field in the last twenty years and that her publisher has done us all a huge favour by bravely publishing in 1982 a long, romantic, cannily observed story about growing up. True, the growing up is set in the 1930s; but do human pain and puzzlement, awkwardness and fantasy, self-love and experience eternal verities? Mary Melwood persuades us that they are. And I am convinced that *The Watcher Bee* will prove that teenagers can still be absorbed in long novels and novels of a non-parent nature (if such novels are written with honesty, humour and sharp awareness of the quirks of human society).

Kate, an orphan, is lovingly cared for by an uncle and by an aunt who is the proud registrar of their little Nottinghamshire village. The family is not minded to be respectable. "What we were wasn't called 'poor'," says Kate. "It was called 'careful' and was regarded as a virtue." But when parvenue Mrs Denham Lucie and her beautiful daughter Zoe come to take refuge from high society in Kate's village they disturb the values of the community. Kate, seeing her lifelong friend and teasing challenger, Charlie, the boy-next-door, succumb to Zoe's charms remembers ruefully Uncle's rhyme in which, as a child, she had

misinterpreted the last word: "Let me partake, not a watcher be" - whence the title. For the book is about Kate, painfully, yet humorously, stoically, philosophically - casting off the role of "watcher bee" - and emerging, clever, positive and sometimes ill at ease, into a full "partaker".

Mary Melwood's direct unvarnished style reminds one of Flora Thompson's *Larkrise to Candleford*, for although Mays's *Reuben's Corner*, for although *The Watcher Bee* is a novel not an autobiography, it springs from the same vein of honest recollection of a rural way of life no longer with us.

Children's Books: An Information Guide is a new handbook containing information about the children's book world, for parents, teachers and librarians. It provides information about: trade and professional organizations, libraries, special collections, book fairs and visits and prizes in Britain and gives advice about buying books. The guide costs £1.70 and is available from The Centre for Children's Books, National Book League, Book House, 45 Bant Hill, London SW18 2ZZ. The Centre for Children's Books also publishes an annotated list of authors and

Rain dancers

Galen Strawson

JAN MARK
Aquarius
Kestrel, £5.95.
0 7226 57935

Viner is the aquarius of *Aquarius* - the water-bringer. But his name, a shortening of "water diver", is little more than a term of abuse in the misty, sodden village where he grows to manhood, where grass grows in the sheep's wool and the people are nicknamed the Webfeet.

Universally reviled, Viner dreams of a place where his diving skills might be of some use. A traveller raises his hopes, telling of a land where water is prized and the king must dance for rain; and one wet dawn he slips away from the village, taking the path that no traveller ever takes, "Over the Top" and out of the mist and rain, into the sun and a series of troubles and trials - that eventually lead him to the palace of the Rain King the traveller told of, a king whose name is Morning Light.

In that land a man becomes king by proving his ability to make rain by dancing. Morning Light first danced two years ago, and the palace courtyard was under water before he was done; he was wed to the queen before the week was out. But that was two years ago, and it has hardly rained since, despite his daily dancing. Viner comes into his own, plotting the course of subterranean streams, detecting the best sites for new wells, proceeding like a saviour round the villages and towns of the realm.

And then the complications begin. The queen bears a daughter, and many in the palace want her to marry Viner straightaway, making him king and dispensing with the ineffectual Morning Light. Viner is ambivalent, wanting the crown but attached to Mased.

be half in love with him. Various plans are hatched and bungled, and the complications complicate: Viner and Morning Light end up on the run with Morning Light's baby daughter and a few not very firm friends.

Viner has grasped Morning Light's true nature. He is not only not a rain dancer, he is the cause of the drought on the land; his dancing puts the clouds to flight. Clearly he belongs down in Viner's dank village, just as Viner belongs in the palace of the rain king. Viner intends to get him there by hook or by crook, and by hook and crook he does so, mercilessly exploiting his love for his daughter.

This is a well-made tale on the whole, with much good descriptive detail, good overall structure and some nicely humorous effects, especially early on. But the ending is unsatisfactory; there is too much bad blood between Viner and Morning Light, too much is unresolved. Viner is hard to identify with, inspiring neither liking, nor sympathy, nor respect. His occasional good impulses are just that - impulses, and both he and Morning Light are implausibly childish, sulky, thoughtless and ungracious. It would, certainly, be very dull if all children's stories were morally as black and white as *The Lord of the Rings*, but Viner's positively neurotic changes of moral mood prevent one from forming any sense of him as a real person. Altogether he is a very strange character to find in a children's story.

Nevertheless, the basic idea of *Aquarius* is a good one; there are some compelling moments. Perhaps the best indication of how good it is is the disappointment one feels when Jan Mark does not make more of Viner's aquarian progress round the parched realms of the rain king; one very much wants to hear more about the diving and the digging, the first water in the deepening trenches, the dry-lipped peasant astonishment, the wells and the gratitude; this is an opportunity missed.

Nowhere Bear

I'm a nowhere bear, a threadbare bear
A ruined bruin, Monsieur Mâitre
With a moth-eaten coat, a buttony stare
And a blast of a growl that's beyond repair...
Oh it isn't fair, it isn't fair,
I have my pride and I do still care
That I seem rather less than debonair,
So my only hope is I'll find somewhere
Before I surrender at last to despair
An old acquaintance, some kind confrère
From the days when we both had a lot more hair,
Who will take me up in his arms and declare -
You're a still very cuddly nowhere bear.

John Mole

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Breaking out

Tom Shippey

MONICA HUGHES

Ring-Rise Ring-Set
Julia MacRae Books, £5.95.
0 86203 069 2

H. M. HOOVER

This Time of Darkness
Methuen, £5.50.
0 416 21770 2

"As one who long in populous city pent... Milton's line describes the heroines of both these books. Liz's escape, in Monica Hughes's *Ring-Rise Ring-Set*, is from the city of the Techs, where she is first discovered slamming down the winter shutters which will keep out the cold (and the short daylight) of the new Ice Age creeping down on Canada; the world she escapes to is that of the Eskimos, or the Eskoes as her people call them, who live in more natural style. Amy, in H. M. Hoover's *This Time of Darkness*, is in emotional plight both physically and hears on page one is only a broken pipe up-level, and when she wins through after many trials to the fabulous "level eighty", she finds that it is only a more comfortable cell of a mental prison, inhabited by adults who still say "There is no beyond... I'm old and I know".

However she too breaks out, and the land she breaks out to is also a paradise where people work with hands not brains, and all purposes are clear.

Rebellion against the way things are? Wish-fulfillment for city children? The two books are different enough to evade the charge of "formula" writing. *Ring-Rise Ring-Set* is for the strategy of having a heroine whom it is rather hard to like. At times she is just "the naughtiest girl in the school", for ever borrowing hair-ribbons and having people say "Really, Liz!". This escalates, though, to a neatly-drawn adolescent selfishness, as she wheedles John the Tech into showing her how to hide in an expedition sled, and - after being stranded on the ice - does the same to Namoocine the Eko to bring her back. We are asked, just the same, to forgive her carelessness for her generosity; and this is where the book's ambition shows and fails. The big scenes are where Liz's wits are up to the authorities of her world and tells them they must not melt the snow and destroy the Eskoes' habitat just to keep the Northern hemisphere free of ice. There must be another way; the scientists will have to "look a little harder". There is something naive in this assumption that all problems have nice answers. Science fiction ought to do better than pony stories.

This Time of Darkness is less relaxed. Its heroine, Amy, has learnt

not to be naughty because the camera always sees and the computer records. She is careful to score "mid-normal" in the tests in the learning centre, she never finishes first, and when she emerges to the streets of rats, grime and crazies, she knows how to avoid attention. She can do one thing, though, which she shouldn't, and that is read. Ms Hoover writes like someone who has seen the predictions about programmed learning and found them profoundly unconvincing. In several scenes she shows Amy's literacy carrying her through by giving her free access to information; Amy carries away with her Axel, the boy whose contribution is certain knowledge that (in spite of what the computers say) there is a world outside.

This book's theme, indeed, is how information degenerates with time and transmission; the trouble is not what people don't know, it's what they do know that's just plain wrong. It is a useful idea for anyone to grasp, and dramatized well in scenes of successive breakdown, whether from the casual pursuit of the lower levels, the impersonal politeness of the city's infallible, stupid computers, or the devolved crazies of the surface. *This Time of Darkness* could be compared with Wells's *Time Machine*; in it the Morlocks escape. This is good science fiction at any level, making only the appropriate concessions for young readers.

Modes and modules

Colin Greenland

JAMILA GAVIN

Double Dare and other stories
Methuen, £3.95.
0 416 21540 8

NICHOLAS FISK

Sweets From a Stranger and other SF stories
Kestrel, £4.95.
0 7226 5759 5

ROBERT SWINDELLS

The Wheaton Book of Science Fiction Stories
Wheaton, £3.95.
0 08 026425 5

Science fiction and the supernatural are modes of writing that displace, defy, and unsettle reality. They supplement the mundane by entertaining possibilities of extension. There is another world behind the wall, there is another society at the bottom of the rubbish chute, there is a past which remains in the present. With the current dominance of social realism in children's fiction such fantasies may seem not quite the thing, but their extra dimension can allow a good look beyond the old confines of the nursery, or the tenth-floor flat. In Jamila Gavin's "Over-The-Log" black

Charlie jumps off a swing at the bomb-site and finds himself back at the mansion that used to stand there. The merchant's children take him for a runaway slave. Gavin's visionary protagonists inhabit an England of transience and urban decay, but compared with the poverty of India or the horror of the Second World War, their environment is presented as quite comfortable, even friendly. In these stories imbalances are redressed, losses restored, so that, although her scope is wide, Gavin's world seems strangely circumscribed.

The children in Nicholas Fisk's stories are loudly and firmly embedded in their cultures, but Fisk is less interested than Gavin in environments. Instead, he uses the equipment of SF, the robots, dream-machines and aliens (hostile or angelic), to exercise the sympathetic imagination by expressing how things look from the other side. An alien victim whose keepers supply the wrong sorts of food and air; a defective robot which comes to understand that its owner's daughter is tormenting it; a collosy of video-games which adore their player because he is "so in Circuit" with them: SF is full of these shiny surfaces, and Fisk exploits them all. His reflections are as moral as Gavin's though less didactic. He demonstrates that being good or even being crafty can get you nowhere, while success can be the result of mere luck or sheer aggression. Fisk's images

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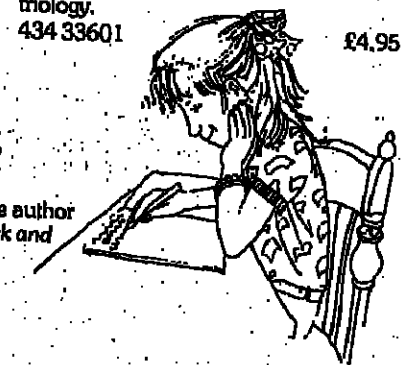
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Encouraging the excellent

Ann Martin

It is a rare child who from the beginning has a strong natural inclination for the excellent: a sense of the beautiful either in words or sounds or pictures can only be fostered by careful encouragement, in the same way as a sense of morality. It is fatal in both cases to make this educational diet unpalatable; either too consciously worthy or, as so often, just plain dull. Picture books can play an important part in growing up, stretching a young child's visual and aural imagination and appreciation from an early age. But earnest adults should beware of books which appeal only to them and should not be beguiled by an overclever text, or paintings that suit their own taste, into buying a book that fails in its appeal to a child who needs a good story to flavour the message.

When it comes to story telling, Hans Andersen must, of course, win hands down, even if the retelling misses something of his magical qualities. Romance and suffering are strong ingredients in *The Wild Swans*, the tale of Elise and her bewitched brothers, who need shirts woven out of nettles before they can be turned again to human form. At the age of eight or thereabouts the lavish pictures, although enjoyed and studied (especially the ghoul in the churchyard where Elise picks the nettles), are scarcely needed, but a younger child would certainly gain extra stimulation from their delicate splendour. This is a worthwhile book for the young reader but sometimes one does feel the money might be better spent on a complete paperback Andersen.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat is by now too well known to need much introduction. Here it is

again, this time with all the words written down and most comically illustrated by Quentin Blake, who has obviously enjoyed the exercise. Although my heart sank slightly when I first saw what seemed to be yet another money-making spin-off, I found this particular version impossible to resist.

Another book noticeable for the quality of its writing is *Babylon*, a gentle tale which is also thought-provoking. Much is left unsaid and merely evoked. Three little black children find their way to the top of a deserted railway viaduct and explore the flowery wilderness they find there, with its glimpses into back gardens and watery reflections in the canal below. Meanwhile two of them reminisce about the life they left behind to come to England. There are plenty of straightforward pictures help the story along but it is a pity that the song which is the book's inspiration has not been set down somewhere, complete with music, for the benefit of those who do not know it.

At present Australia seems to be the source of a quantity of children's books, albeit of varying quality. This time the five on offer are all worth a second – or even a third – glance. Most attractive is perhaps *The Train to Bondi Beach*. Watercolour paintings, redolent of the 1930s, illustrate this simple but appealing tale of a little boy in a pre-war seaside town who yearns to be old enough to sell papers to the tram passengers. The evocative style of the delightful illustrations, well matched by the text, may first attract adults but they would be more than justified in buying this book for their children. The hero in *Mary Moves to the Country* is reluctant to leave town for an isolated farm: to make matters worse, he finds himself the only boy in his class at the small local school. He has the all-too-frequent nine year old's distaste for girls, but when he discovers that one of them rides around on a motor bike and

beats him at skateboarding, his opinion changes; all ends well and the moral is neatly, if tritely, pointed. The pen and watercolour pictures are predominantly in shades of brown and blue, nicely humorous and pretty to look at.

The next three volumes have the same author and illustrator; each story is told in cheerful doggerel and the pages are covered with drawings in a thoroughly modern idiom, crude and colourful. These quasi-moral tales, told in tongue-in-cheek with neat, amoral twists to the endings that remind one of Roald Dahl will arouse the same slightly horrified amusement in an adult and gleeful relish in a child. I particularly liked *Susan Shouted Shark*, in which not the lying Susan but the innocent Mayor is eaten, and a close second is *Dreadful David Dee* with his chemistry set which, misused, finally blows the disobedient boy into space for the future delectation of scientists. *Greedy Glutton Garth* has a rather feeble story, but the pictures are equally funny. All deserve a place on library shelves.

The last two of this particular bunch are of more dubious quality. A young child would enjoy the clear colours and the flat naive style of the pictures in *The Bird's Wedding*, irrespective of the rhyme that accompanies it, which is a second-rate "Who killed Cock Robin?" Children may enjoy the sentimentality of *The Kind Wolf*, although for an adult this saccharine tale of a wolf who only wants to do the other animals but has first to overcome their natural suspicions is irritating, breaking the cardinal rule of using the animal's real nature to motivate the action: it is unredeemed by the pleasant but ordinary pictures.

The irrational nonsense of *Selina, the Mouse and the Giant Cat* is a different matter. In this case the pretty etchings (the technique is well and carefully explained at the end) deserve a better story. As for *Peggy the Horse*, its dreary whimsy is presumably supposed to be imaginative fantasy. Why, bother to import a book like this? German picture books are of varying quality but this is the worst I have come across so far.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: *The Wild Swans*. Retold by Amy Ehrlich. Illustrated by Susan Jeffers. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 32659 8.

TIM RICE and ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. Pavilion Books. £4.95. 0 907516 02 5.

JILL PATON WALSH: *Babylon*. Illustrated by Jennifer Northway. André Deutsch. £4.95. 0 235 97362 1.

KATE WALKER: *Mary Moves to the Country*. Illustrated by Bruce Treloar. Methuen. £3.50. 0 454 002122.

ELIZABETH HATHORN: *The Train to Bondi Beach*. Illustrated by Julie Vivas. Methuen. £4.50. 0 454 00266 1.

RAYMOND SMITH and HENRY SCHONHEIMER: *Susan Shouted Shark*. *Dreadful David Dee*. *Greedy Glutton Garth*. Hutchinson. £3.95 each. 0 09 137500 2, 0 09 137490 1, 0 09 137510 X.

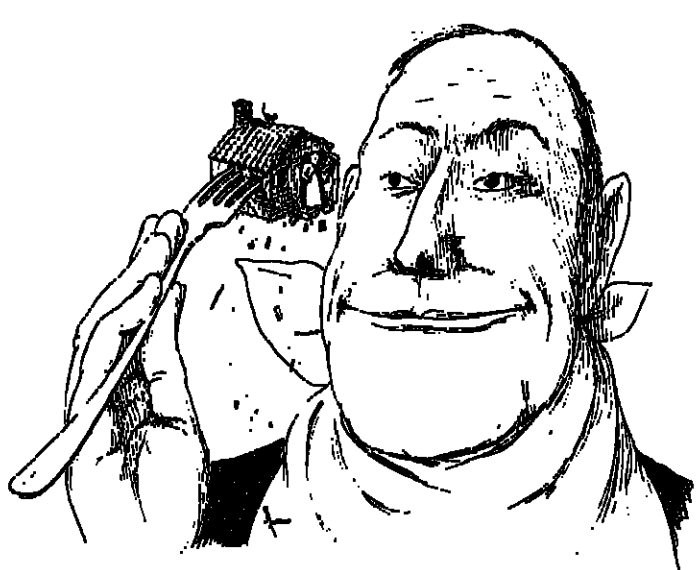
The Bird's Wedding. Adapted and translated by Lucy Meredith. Illustrated by Masako Matsumura. Faber. £4.25. 0 571 11896 8.

PETER NICKL: *The Story of the Kind Wolf*. Retold by Marion Koenig. Illustrated by Jozsef Wilkoff. Faber. £4.25. 0 571 11897 6.

SUSI BONDAL: *Selina, the Mouse and the Giant Cat*. Translated by Lucy Meredith. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 11855 0.

ANGELIKA KAUFMANN and FRIEDRIKE MAYROCKER: *Peggy the Horse*. A. and C. Black. £3.95. 0 907234 14 3.

This paperback edition of Kit Williams's *Maskerade*, which has recently been published by Jonathan Cape (£1.50. 0 224 02937 1), has an introduction by the author which recounts the story of the hiding and finding of the treasure. It also provides a photograph of the hiding place and the answers to the clues in the original edition.



One of Erik Blegvad's illustrations to *The Parrot in the Garret*, which is reviewed below.

A sense of place

John Mole

ERIK and LENORE BLEGVAD

The Parrot in the Garret
Julia MacRae Books. £3.95.
0 86203 049 8

This parrot is a magpie, and its bright pickings are from the chests of several popular treasures: twenty-six traditional rhymes about dwellings.

Nesta, wells, a basin of water, the moon (of course) and a variety of curious houses. The ubiquitous Old Woman presides – in her shoe, her coal-scuttle, under the hill (you never ask which hill in a nursery rhyme), and, most disquietingly, meeting a fate as terrible and final as her name:

There was an old woman called Nothing,
Who rejoiced in a dwelling exceedingly small;
A man stretched his mouth to its utmost extent,
And down at one gulp house and old woman went.

Erik Blegvad has illustrated this one marvellously, with the perfect blend of whimsy and terror; the cosy cottage transfixed by the prongs of a fork and just about to enter the not-yet-opened mouth of a grinning gourmet. The old woman has opened the door at eye-level with her devourer, the walls are already disintegrating, and on the roof a minute cat stands with its tail erect in fear. You can almost hear it hissing.

The Parrot in the Garret is a delightful enterprise. It's properly haunted, not least by the Ghost of Picture Book Past. Each little event is framed on its page, colour washes alternating with line drawings of needle-thin delicacy. There's a touch of the sampler about them, almost as if they might hang on the walls of Poll's garret as he sits alone, robbed of his toast and tea, and contemplates domestic bliss:

A little brown bird built a little brown nest
Up in a shady tree.
And in it there lived his little brown wife
And little brown children three.
Once upon a time. If only...

Creatures

The butterfly, alive inside a box,
Beats with its powdered wings in soundless knocks
And wishes polythene were hollyhocks.

The beetle clambering across the road
Appears to find his body quite a load;
My fingers meddle with his highway code

And slugs are rescued from the fatal hiss
Of tyres that hiss like zigzagged liquorice
On zigzagged liquorice, but sometimes miss.

Two snails are raced across a glistening stone
(Each eye thrust forward like a microphone)
So slowly that the winner is unknown.

To all these little creatures I collect
I mean no cruelty or disrespect
Although their day-by-day routine is wrecked.

They may remember their experience,
Though at the time it made no sort of sense,
And treat it with a kind of reverence.

It may be something that they never mention,
An episode outside their apprehension,
Like some predestined intervention.

John Fuller

Earthy couplets

Andrew Hislop

ROALD DAHL

Revolting Rhymes
Quentin Blake.
Cape. £3.95.
0 224 02932 0

Revolting Rhymes is not a title to seduce the more pernicious of parents who police their children's cultural intake. Nor will Roald Dahl's verse mutations of classic fairytales please the purists who like their Grimm, Jacobs and Perrault unadulterated, still less sent up, turned inside out and brought down to the earthy in couplets. And those who are not particularly partial to having their noses rubbed in doggerel might well wince at the pedestrian irritant to bear snouts with which young Goldilocks decorates Ursula Minor's bunk:

Worse still, upon the heel of one
Was something that a dog had done.
I say once more, what would you think
If all this horrid dirt and stink
Was smeared upon your eiderdown
By this revolting little clown?

These rhymes, though, are rarely really revolting, in the playground-sulphur sense of the word. They toy with tradition rather than muscle their way beyond the bounds of decency. "Cinderella" offers a rich diet of blood and guts ("I guess you think you know this story/You don't"). The real one's much more gory," but it is hardly strong meat compared with what now passes for (and succeeds as) entertainment for children. A few people get their heads chopped off by the deceptively inclined prince whom Cinderella ditches for a jam-maker. (Anyway, one of the Ugly Sisters – "The one whose face was blotched with blisters" – had flushed the original slipper down the loo so the clobbered-together coupling with royalty had already started on the wrong foot.)

Purden is also muted. Cinder, when the prince grabs her dress as midnight smokes, is reduced to her underwear. Little Red Riding Hood "whips a pistol from her knicker" to blast her lupine aggressor into a wolfskin coat, then repeats the trick when making a guest appearance in Dahl's revamped version of "The Three Little Pigs", only this time the trigger-happy heroine bags a pigskin travelling case as well as more big bad winter wear.

And far from adding dirt to "Jack and the Beanstalk", this curious tale, written before our entry into the Common Market and the advent of the green pound, which tells how a burgeoning mountain of uneaten agricultural produce can be turned into gold, now becomes a veritable parable of the life-preserving qualities of cleanliness. Jack, realizing that the plant's ability to distinguish our national copiousness aroma has lethal consequences ("By Christopher!"),

Jack cried, "By gum! The Giant's eaten up my mum!" I scrubs all essence of England from his pores. The giant deprived of all whiff of humanity can only mutter "FE FI FO FUM/RIGHT NOW I CAN'T SMELL ANYONE."
"A bath", remarks the enriched Jack, "does seem to pay/I'm going to have one every day."

And as for "Goldilocks", Dahl is positively a missionary in advocating a need for moral revision of the old version mouthed down to us through the years by mother.

This famous wicked little tale Should never have been put on sale. It is a mystery to me Why loving parents cannot see That this is actually a book About a brazen little crook.

Far from allowing his Goldilocks to get off scot-free, Dahl ends his tale with Big Bear telling Baby Bear that if he wishes to eat his porridge he will have to consume the purloining hussy as well for there lies his breakfast.

Revolting Rhymes is in fact pure pleasure. Raucous, irreverent, inventive, richly colloquial in its language, never afraid to press-gang the inappropriate into its service, it delights with its teasing turns of phrase and twists of plot. Snow-White's dwarfs turn out to be "Ex horse-race jockeys" who "squandered all their resources" at the race-track backing horses, and the talking mirror is commended to provide the names of future winners. As the glass revealed the name of its first tip "The Dwarfs went absolutely daff." They kissed young Snow-White fore and aft.

But is it for children? The gulf between language for children and language of children, the prescriptive and the descriptive, remains, despite old-school grammar caned into young minds or deep-structured grammar encoded into them, mercifully wide. Children do not speak as they are spoken to by adults. They speak as they speak with each other. But they are quite capable of making muggie forays into parental patter seizing a word or phrase which they might not fully understand and playing with it. (Indeed, some grown-up phatic utterances can only be rendered pleasurable when not understood.) Many authors who convert literature for children, particularly classics which were originally written for them, make the mistake of producing, in the name of comprehension, andyone, simplified texts devoid of the joys of both adult and juvenile linguistic play. There are some neutered versions of fairytales which are reduced to bare accounts of their curious neurotic plots. Dahl, however, has chosen, like the best of children's authors to enjoy himself and the young will find his zest contagious and his rhymes hilarious even if they do not pick up every comic nuance. And his muse is admirably partnered by the witty drawings of Quentin Blake.

Ballad

O she is my love, and from India
I shall fetch a feather back for her,
A peacock feather of green and blue,
To show I am faithful, kind and true:

At the customs of disgrace
Wear it with honour in my face

On the airways of despair
Carry it through the thinning air
Round ring-roads of disillusion
Bring it past traffics of confusion

The Ministers of the Crown may write
Speeches to starve its colours white

The law lords in their courts may say
This is not our law and he should obey

The heads on the television screens
May patronise me to smithereens

But I will be faithful, kind and true,
And a peacock feather of green and blue
Is what I shall fetch back for her,
Ten thousand miles from India.

Alan Brownjohn



A detail from one of the stages of the journey undertaken by the solitary horseman in Anno's Britain (Bodley Head. £4.95. 0 370 30916 2), the most recent picture book by the Japanese artist Mitsumasa Anno. Like Anno's *Journey and Anno's Italy*, the book has no text. It traces the progress of a horse and rider through a British landscape which combines many familiar features – thatched cottages, half-timbered houses, village greens, and duck ponds – with a distinctive Japanese feel.

Romantic and real

Kicki Moxon Browne

Children of the Forest, a book which is new to this country, was first published in Sweden in 1910. Elsa Beskow is the most consistently popular author-artist in her native country. (Recent statistics of loans from its public libraries put her second or third place of all authors – Astrid Lindgren has remained number one for many years.) *Children of the Forest* is perhaps Beskow's best-loved picture book. The text in the original is in verse, neat and precise, and with immaculate rhythm and rhyme – much of the book's appeal to children lies in anticipating the last word of each couplet. In the English version, the verses have – probably wisely – been replaced by prose and without the rhythm to hold it together, the text, which describes a typical year with a family of little people, has taken on a rather distant voice. One of the features which accounts for the book's huge, long-standing success is presumably the fascination of seeing tiny people surrounded by and putting into use vast enlarged, familiar objects. A Swedish child has an instant emotional response to a pine forest and its contents here so lovingly reproduced: adders, pismires in an antihill, wild fungi (chanterelles, boletus, fly agaric), linnaea growing on mossy ground, a tiny forest fern reflecting the white sky of a Nordic summer night. But to an English child, all this may seem more exotic and therefore less absorbing. Nevertheless much of the book's delicate charm has survived.

From romantic forest idyll to the noisy present: *Going Shopping* is the briefest account of a routine trip to the supermarket. I liked the understated, double-edged quality of this book: on one level it is completely straightforward, and the simple text and lively pictures make it ideal for a child just learning to read. Parents, on the other hand, used to the repetitive slog of shopping with small children, will smile at the echoes in the text: "Out of the car / and into the shop. / Shopping, shopping / more and more shopping."

Rather in the same vein is *On Friday Something Funny Happened*, with a similarly po-faced reminder to the adult reader of how very untidy life is in the company of young children. This is a straight forward account in a few words and many pictures of what two children get up to on the different days of a typical week, starting and finishing with "On Saturday we went shopping". The neutral tones paired with freud-

drawings, capturing wonderfully the built-in slapstick quality of early childhood. These high-spirited children charge ahead like speedy bulldozers, knocking objects over and flattening them underfoot without even noticing, or absentmindedly falling over in the mud. The funny thing that happened on Friday was that peace and quiet suddenly descended.

Angry Arthur is about a small boy who gets so angry about not being allowed to watch a late television programme that his anger summons up thunder, lightning and typhoons, causing first the house to crack up, then like a film set, then the town, then the whole earth. (Arthur's grandmother in an astronaut's suit sits cooly knitting in her rocking chair, the ball of wool floating weightlessly above her.) Finally, Arthur's fury unleashes a universequake, and we leave him sitting on his bed in empty space, trying to remember what it was that he got so angry about. It is an apt, affectionate description of the black, all-devouring rage every child feels from time to time. There is no attempt at moralizing, and because of the sheer, extravagance of it all, there is no need to smooth things over by introducing a "happy ending".

If *Angry Arthur* is hyperbolic, the mood in the wordless *Moonlight* is very different: cool, calm, always realistic. In the earlier *Sunshine* by the same artist, we set in on the start of a day in a little girl's life, and now we can observe the same girl at the opposite end of the day, gently graduating from supper to bedtime to bedtime. Jan Ormerod's quietly amusing drawings are excellent studies of people pottering about doing nothing in particular except getting on with day-to-day living, and the humour often stems from her ability to capture odd little gestures and mannerisms in people.

My World is a series of snapshots – verbal and pictorial – of the people and everyday objects that surround a small girl. The blurb on the inside flap informs us wordily that the book is "for parent-child sharing or just as a quiet reading experience", but the book itself is likeable and lighthearted. The text consists of a series of relaxed little verses. I rather liked the fact that no attempt has been made to squeeze them into a particular metre by adding on extra words; instead they tumble on freely with a rhyme at the end of every two lines. I also like the funny little images: the mother who has so much hair you could stuff an old armchair with it; the dog that looks as if it is made of marbled chocolate and vanilla.

The pictures, in turn, are a mixture of the familiar and the fantastical. The mother who has so much hair you could stuff an old armchair with it; the dog that looks as if it is made of marbled chocolate and vanilla. The pictures, in turn, are a mixture of the familiar and the fantastical.

deliciously bright colours look good enough to eat.

A new book by John Burningham is always eagerly awaited. In his *Avocado Baby*, an ailing baby steadfastly refuses to eat until one day it is given mashed avocado pear, devours it (with a rather surprised look on its face) and from then on develops superhuman strength. Forever dressed in a blue babygown and with an engagingly bald head, the baby carts grand pianos and cars about, and sorts out baddies, acting as a bodyguard for its rather weedy family, resting innocently in its carrycot, in between. As if to stress the fact that avocados really deserve a reputation for being a wonderful food the endpapers solemnly include a botanically detailed drawing of a *Persea gratissima* in all its different stages, with little Burninghamesque babies clambering all over the plants. I find his reluctant joie de vivre completely irresistible.

A new book from Pat Hutchins is always a treat too, and in the counting book *One Hunter* she gives her usual virtuoso performance. A big game hunter goes stalking across the plain, gun cocked and eyes fixed determinedly straight ahead. Only the reader notices that he is walking straight past, sometimes even right on top of, various tropical animals, partly hidden in the vegetation. Only the sound of a flock of parrots rising alerts the hunter, and he turns to face "10 parrots 9 shakes 8 monkeys" and so on; turn to the next page and he is seen running for his life, gun and spectacles flying. Of all the counting books I have come across, this certainly has the highest dramatic content.

ELSA BESKOW: *Children of the Forest*. Ernest Benn. £3.95. 0 510 001289

SARAH GARLAND: *Going Shopping*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30446 2

JOHN PRATER: *On Friday Something Funny Happened*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30449 7

HIAWYN ORAM: *Angry Arthur*. Illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura. Andersen Press. £3.95. 0 86264 017 2

JAN ORMEROD: *Moonlight*. Kestrel Books. £3.95. 07226 5749 8

KILMENY NILAND: *My World*. Hodder and Stoughton. £3.50. 0 340 26626 0

JOHN BURNINGHAM: *Avocado Baby*. Jonathan Cape. £3.95. 0 224 02804 8

PAT HUTCHINS: *One Hunter*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30930 0

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Hodder & Stoughton Children's Books

School charms

Judith Elkin

DIANA WYNNE JONES
Witch Week
Macmillan. £5.50.
0 333 33189 3

Diana Wynne Jones has returned to the fast-moving pace and immensely entertaining tone of *Charmed Life* in this latest book. The time is, more or less, our familiar present-day world, but heavily steeped in witchcraft, and in a period of suppression: witchcraft is illegal, witches are burned on bonfires and the Inquisitors are an everyday threat.

Set within the enclosed community of a boarding school, the action centres on class 2Y who, at the age of about twelve, are just discovering their own witchcraft, some reluctantly, some delightedly, others unwittingly and with hilarious results. The story begins with a note to the teacher of 2Y, saying "Someone in this class is a witch." An innocuous enough comment but not when witchcraft is punishable by burning. The teacher broods on the implications of the note and the children write their private daily diaries, revealing, although somewhat obscurely, their individual feelings, viewpoints and relationships. In the first few pages, the reader is offered a huge amount of instant background detail and is likely to be totally committed to this outrageous story.

It transpires that there is more than one witch in the class, and this idea allows free rein to Diana Wynne Jones's vividly inventive imagination, as she explores the children's varied, yet largely uncontrolled magic, set against their constant fear of discovery. As usual she manages to follow several parallel threads without any loss of impetus or blurring of characters.

Star turns

Gillian Cross

FAMELA ROPNER

Helping Mr Paterson
Chatto and Windus. £4.95.
0 7011 2605 1

JEAN WILLS

Stargazers' Folly
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10769 2

There is always a shortage of original, interesting plots. It is said, therefore, to find two of them which fall to develop into properly satisfying books. Of the two, *Helping Mr Paterson* is the more original. William, the narrator, and his two sisters, Rose and Minnie, befriend Mr Paterson, an eccentric stranger who believes that people should reject the trappings of modern society and listen for "the voices of the old world". They save him from drowning and try to protect him from the hostility of Mrs Brewster, a busybody and local councillor. (Why do local councillors get such undeservedly harsh treatment in children's books?) Gradually, they come to believe in his ideas and go with him to join the Loch Ness monster. While the television cameras are on him, Mr Paterson chooses to fail in this attempt, but later he calls up the monster and vanishes, leaving each of the children with a gift: Rose learns to express her feelings through her violin playing; William achieves his ambition of taking a photograph; Minnie, who is closest to Mr Paterson, is left his soul in her photograph.

There are several ways to treat a story like this but, unfortunately, the book does not choose one in particular. For much of the time - when Mr Paterson is sacrificing an egg in the local stone circle, for example, or being mistaken for an alien from a UFO - it is broadly comic. But the main theme of listening to the old world and its gods, is obviously serious and there is a

moment of genuine emotion and power when the monster finally emerges from Loch Ness. It is, of course, not impossible to combine the two moods, but the combination requires a sensitive touch and much greater subtlety of characterization than is shown here. Moreover, the idea of listening to the old gods is not clearly thought out. For Rose, it implies the integration of emotion and technique. For Mr Paterson, it seems to involve blowing into a sea shell to summon fish. Had these two concepts, and the varied moods of the book, been convincingly linked, the story could have been extremely powerful. As it is, it straddles an uneasy gap between two very different genres.

Stargazers' Folly has more modest aims. Greg, who is mad about astronomy, conceals a plan to make his own telescope, and set up a secret observatory in the dome of the local art college. Unfortunately, his friends insist on joining in. Having sneaked into the dome for the first session of stargazing, they are accidentally looked in and watch their town being flooded. But their trespassing is forgiven, because they are able to save some pictures from flood damage. All ends well. Solitary Greg makes a good friend and gets his observatory, made from the polystyrene packing case of his mother's new freezer.

Greg is a likeable character. His obsession with astronomy is completely credible and the details of his attempt to make a telescope are fascinating. Instead of developing this aspect of the story, however, the author has chosen to fill the book with an enormous number of people who all talk constantly. There are six or seven of Greg's friends, plus art students, art teachers and other adults. Eventually, the barrage of names and chat becomes exhausting, because a few of the characters develop any real personality or relationships. Since the story, although interesting, is rather slight for a book of this length, it founders like an overloaded boat, which is a pity, because Jean Wills clearly has a feel for the atmosphere of school life and the excitement generated by an enthralling interest.

Misdeeds and misunderstandings

Brian Baumfield

SHEILA LAVELLE

The Fiend Next Door
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10774 1

BETSY BYARS

The Animal, The Vegetable and John D. Jones
Bodley Head. £13.95.
0 370 30914 6

Horrid children are always fun to read about, but traditionally they should get their just deserts - unless related to the St Trinians family. In these two books rewards and penalties are meted out in varying degrees of sophistication. Both deal with relationships - the first a symbiotic friendship between two neighbouring girls of similar age, and the second concerning the difficulties and misunderstandings faced by the children of two families brought together by the divorces of their respective parents.

The book by Sheila Lavelle, author of *My Best Friend* is aimed at readers of eight years old and over, and consists of the further misdeeds of one Angela Mitchell and her next door friend Charlotte, known as "Charlie". Angela is the innovator of fiendish tricks and with devilish skill manages

invariably to involve the comparatively innocent Charlie, ensuring that it is she who always gets the blame. The pranks vary from the merely mischievous to the downright dangerous. It is one thing to let loose a bat in the classroom under the pretext of it being an interesting pet, but quite another to pretend to kidnap a baby, or hijack a milkfloat which nearly crashes.

In the final chapter the fiend could be said to get her too-mild comeuppance, when her deceitful trick rebounds and reveals her to be both mean and spiteful. Undoubtedly there are children like these two, but while Charlie emerges as an average, if rather weak-willed child, Angela comes over as a thoroughly nasty little girl, seemingly lacking in any redeeming grace. One wonders why the friendship survived. The structure of the book is wholly episodic, but it is genuinely funny and the invention never flags. One is left with a slightly uneasy feeling, however, that it should carry a Government Health Warning.

The Animal, The Vegetable and John D. Jones by Betsy Byars explores with greater subtlety the conflict that can arise between siblings, between children and their parents, and between families when brought together in confined surroundings. Betsy Byars is an American writer with a successful string of children's books to her credit. Although this one is set firmly in the United States (with some expressions unfamiliar to British

readers), the characters and situations will be universally recognized.

Clara and her elder sister Deanie are to go on holiday with their divorced father in a house by the sea. Clara is already resentful and jealous of her sister, who seems to have greater claim on her father's attention. However, both sisters are united in their shock and annoyance when they discover their father's friend, Dolores, also a divorcee, is to join them on holiday with her son John D. Jones. John D. is a precocious, and on the surface at least, unattractive boy, who sees the world as "a big bland glass of niceness" into which he is "the acid tablet dropped in to start things fizzing". Distancing himself from his mother and companions, he views them with superior distaste - a feeling so evident that it provokes instant dislike from Clara and Deanie. The subsequent discovery of plot, which results in self discovery for both Clara and John D., and a realization that the world is a more tolerable place than they had supposed, is achieved with considerable effect and economy of effort.

The characters of the children are well drawn and many a child (and adult) will readily understand why John D. chooses to put himself into such an uncomfortable position, and why Clara feels constrained to test her own physical endurance to the point of danger. A thoughtful, entertaining book for nine-year olds.

The would-be deliverer

Cara Chanteau

TANITH LEE

Prince on a White Horse
Macmillan. £5.50.
0 333 32929 5

The story opens, in the best tradition, with a prince riding his horse through the Waste. The immediate problem is that the Prince cannot remember his name, where he comes from, how he got there and has simply no idea what country he is in. In fact, he never does, although a series of bizarre adventures leads answers to all the other questions. At a rough guess, one could locate the country as a little way off the coast of the land where *The Wild Things Are*, adjoining Narnia, abutting Mordor, adjacent to Wonderland, and certainly very close to twelfth-century France.

The resulting miscellany provides, at its best, a lot of amusing writing and occasional moments of parody as the hero copes with Gargings (like bats); Bezzles, Buzzles and Bozzles (like Wild Things); honnerdins (like ants) and all the other colourful fauna which confront him in this strange world. He

is aided and abetted by his horse who has a nice line in dry equine wit reminiscent of Bree in *The Horse and His Boy*. The horse has many other useful talents - drawing Bezzlegams, changing into a lion and the like - which prove quite providential in extracting the Prince from potentially trying situations. Indeed, the Prince finds a quantity of helpers: Germant the Red who has trouble deciding that he doesn't want to be a champion after all and then finds himself compelled to do the decent thing; Germant, the rather impatient Lady of the Waste; assorted Theels and Kreels and the beautiful sky people.

Things begin to sort themselves out when the Prince meets Vultikan the Hoiler, a Vulnordilly Blacksmith type, who provides him with a sword and a suit of armour, and informs him that he is the Looked-for-Deliverer. To the bewildered Prince, this sounds like the name of a town or a very old book nobody ever bothered to read. The Prince finds life in an unfamiliar world fairly confusing and really prefers the quiet life. He is therefore cast in the role of reluctant hero. Much of the humour arises out of the justifiable irritation his helpers feel when faced by this recalcitrant and ignorant Looked-for-Deliverer. It is

true that it is not easy to respond in a suitably chivalric manner to somebody who, once you have gone to all the trouble of telling him about the Castle of Bone where all the secrets of the world are hidden, guarded by a one hundred per cent effective dragon, turns round and says "Well, in that case, I think I'll leave it" - hardly the reaction of a Perceval with whom there is a discernible similarity, but then bleeding lances and holy grails are not in question. The Prince is to fight against Nulgrave, at the mention of whose name everyone falls into a terrified silence. Nulgrave, it emerges later, is a sort of foggy personification of despair. The Prince, however, gradually assumes his weighty responsibilities and muddles through.

If all this is beginning to sound insufferably derivative, the mixture is leavened by a quirky humour that makes the whole escapade much more enjoyable than a mere amalgam of mythologies. It is though Le Morte D'Arthur had been written by the author of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Although Tanith Lee's story may not possess the lasting resonance and moral dimension of myths as you know and love them, she has none the less concocted a story which is bound to please, and prepare those of ten plus for joys in store.

A psychological friend

Josephine Karavasil

HELEN CRESSWELL

Dear Shrink
Feber. £5.25.
0 571 119123

Although said to be for "younger teenagers", the target market for *Dear Shrink* is in fact difficult to determine because the shifting identity of the first-person narrator, Oliver, places it somewhat uneasily between the Bagthorpe Saga and a teenage novel with a highly "literate" narrator like Alden Chambers' *Breaktime*. The first half of the story is told in retrospect by an Oliver of sixteen or so, from diaries kept at the time. The second half is a series of letters from Jung, the "Shrink" of the title, and Oliver gets to know Mark, a boy whom he writes because he has no one else to confide in. A narrator who can mention Jung's Theory of Synchronicity and the collective unconscious, Jane Eyre, Oliver Twist,

Roots, David Copperfield and Lady Macbeth, quote from *Hamlet*, and allude to T. S. Eliot makes the book seem appropriate for prodigiously literate older teenagers, yet the story he tells, of a somewhat cosy family coming into contact with death, and the "real world" of people in care, is for rather younger children.

Oliver, the middle child of a professional middle-class family, his brother William and sister Lucy are left with a housekeeper, Mrs Barley, when their parents go off to explore the Amazon jungle. Barley is quite unlike their mother's rosy memories of her, but the children learn to live with her reasonably amicably. When she suddenly dies of a heart attack they have to be put into care. Oliver and Lucy stay at a foster home until, alerted for a Guy Fawkes accident, they are sent to a Home. There Lucy and Oliver get to know Mark, an apprentice plumber who wants to get rich. When the couple in charge of the Home have to leave for family reasons, all the children, especially Mark, feel betrayed. Mark runs away and vandalizes Oliver's family house,

before making off in the family car. Meanwhile, Oliver, William and Lucy are missing their parents so much that they plan an escape to their shack in the countryside. Arriving there in a blizzard just before Christmas, they find Mark in hiding with a broken leg. Just when they seem impossibly snowed in, a helicopter, complete with father, arrives. The parents have decided that they could not, after all, spend Christmas away from their children.

Despite the pat ending, the story is very readable, with the plot developing at a good pace. People's reactions to death are astutely handled. Barley's own daughters call death "decease" and are mainly interested in the division of her belongings, but, in one of the most closely observed moments of the book, Oliver and William experience the shock of going out into ordinary street life after the trauma of a death in the house. Elsewhere the humour is characteristic of Helen Cresswell and the technique of letters to a "psychological friend" enables her to pose some serious social and psychological questions with a pleasing lightness of touch.

The problems of the gifted child

Alan Hollinghurst

ANDREW LANG

The Chronicles of Pantoullia
191pp. Methuen. £5.50.
0 416 21940 3

The chronicles of Pantoullia combine two books, the story of *Prince Prigio* (1899) and the adventures of his son, *Prince Ricardo* (1893); both antedate *The Blue Fairy Book* of 1899, the first in Andrew Lang's great spectrum of anthologies of children's stories. But they reveal already an imagination steeped in fairy literature, and adding to that tradition with considerable sophistication. The stories repeatedly take their bearings by literary cross-reference. Some of these would be appreciated by children: the king of Pantoullia is the grandson of Cinderella and includes Madame La Belle au Bois-Dormant among his ancestors; Prince Prigio is given the whole battery of fairy gifts - seven-league boots, flying carpets, wishing caps and so on. On the other hand Prince Ricardo is saved by a weapon-sword described by Sir Kenelm Digby, and his tale has elements drawn from

Scott and Ariosto as well as the Gawain poet and others; the tale of the Yellow Dwarf recounted here awaits its proper placement, anthologized in *The Blue Fairy Book* years later. Pantoullia, we may assume, is not only a country but, as its name suggests, a state of slippage, a bookish, witty and even cynical in its handling of the stuff of children's fiction.

The best idea in the book is one which specially allows for the intellectual approach. At his christening Prince Prigio receives from a fairy the gift of being "too clever". As a result Prigio is always precociously right, correcting his own tutors, and spending his spare time in such pursuits as translating Egyptian hieroglyphs into French poetry. But as he soon learns, cleverness has to be concealed if one is to be liked; and if one falls in love then a belief in the impossibles of the fairy world will replace the reliance on "bored, useless facts". To impress the daughter of the English ambassador he undertakes daring exploits and brings her the head of the salamandrine Firebrake, which he has cleverly provoked into battle with the icy Remora, a disarming creature with a head an inch high and a mile wide.

The battle between the two is an emblem of the *Chronicles'* concern

with balancing the intellect and the heart, the material and the passionate. Prince Ricardo in the second book is the opposite of his father, spoilt by fairy books and easy victories secured by the fairy gifts. We sustain Lang's fairies, like Barrie's, with the applause which expresses our belief, at the same time as we see that to rely on fairies too much would be to turn irretrievably away from the world. Ricardo is corrected by the substitution of ordinary boots, cap and carpet for the magic ones, though saved from the worse scrapes in which this lands him by Princess Jacqueline, a sorceress who turns herself into various insects to sting his adversaries. This story is far more convoluted and referential than that of Prigio, and is both denser in incident and more facetious in treatment; its pleasantest caprice is perhaps the mass conversion of the Incas to the Lutheran Church. There is also the amusingly belligerent Giant Who Does Not Know When He Has Had Enough, a figure derived from the Green Man and disastrously misused (as are all the episodes) by the simplistic illustrations of Jeanne Titherington, in several shades of grey, which recast this droll and superior book in a limbo drained of significance and render its knowingness as a fatuous naïveté.

Encountering the marvellous

Eva Gillies

RUTH MANNING-SANDERS

A Book of Heroes and Heroines
Illustrated by Robin Jacques
Methuen. £4.95.
0 416 89310 4

JOHN MERCER

The Stories of Vanishing Peoples

Illustrated by Tony Evora
Allison and Busby. £5.95.
0 85031 421 6

Having run out, it seems, of dragons, witches and monsters, Ruth Manning-Sanders has in her latest collection of tales focused on human heroes and heroines; with, in fact, a certain amount of positive discrimination in favour of the latter. The heroes in these stories are on the whole homely, not glamorous figures: one Arabian prince, yes, but after that it's Jack and Dick and Grandfather Pavel - peasants, apprentices, at most a retired Hussar who's taken to farming, and their encounters with the marvellous are appropriately practical, brisk, almost reluctant. They seem relieved to return, more or less, to the status quo - Grandfather Pavel to his hut among the mountains, Jack to cutting his mother's peat each morning. A workaday lot, by and large.

The heroines seem at first to provide a welcome contrast. There is, indeed, one lonely old woman from Schleswig-Holstein to balance that incongruous Arabian prince; but the others are uniformly young and beautiful. They lead active lives, too. In Sweden, a lovely persecuted princess breaks the enchantment that has transformed her beloved into a big grey wolf; when the couple return in triumph, the classic atmosphere - and her two daughters are duly turned into bats. In Russia, the princess - the same or another, it hardly seems to matter - defeats the witch and breaks the spell with kisses; in Italy, the girl is a shoemaker's daughter, the evil old female an Ogre, and the prince imprisoned underground, beneath a cabbage. Always, it is the princess, not the prince, who does the rescuing; yet, somehow, the effect is not of gallant adventure at all. There is a sameness about these loyal and active heroines, even the Red Indian Bright Tear Child: not only young and beautiful (as is only proper), they are also presented as uniformly, depressingly nice. We are forever being told, unnecessarily, about Princesses. Somebody, improbably sweet and loving nature. Well, of course, she's the goody in the story - but need she have quite so much sugar sprinkled on her? The spice must, I suppose, be sought in Robin Sanders's beautiful and often witty

illustrations, which add greatly to the pleasure of the book.

One turns with ungrateful relief to John Mercer's collection of tales handed down by the doomed and dying peoples of the world: by Eskimos and Ainu, Brazilian Indians and Gypsies and the nomad peoples of the Sahara. They feature armadillos, beavers and red-chested monkeys, and the life and death of a man-eating sun. Not why the sea is boiling hot, or whether pigs have wings - these are foolish questions after all; but how the Old Man made the world, and how men first got fire; why the owl has such huge eyes, why some animals are still wild while others live with man; why the Gypsy fiddle can make men leap and cry, and the Efe Pygmies, and the other people, are not afraid of lightning. The stories are often funny, sometimes sad, but always concerned to make sense, both of the natural world and of human social institutions. There is a leanness about

A magic staff

Ruth Harris

P. L. TRAVERS

Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane
Collins. £4.95.
0 00 181126

Nearly fifty years ago, when Mary Poppins arrived at Number 17 Cherry Tree Lane and slid up the banisters, it was Jane and Michael who saw her do it and Jane and Michael who watched her unpacking her empty carpet bag - "Nothing in it, did you say?" - and gulped down a spoonful each from her magic bottle, pink strawberry ice for Michael and lime juice cordial, green and silvery, for Jane. The early Mary Poppins books are written from the children's point of view. They don't tell their parents about their adventures. Mary Poppins is their private link between the fantastic and the commonplace and whether undoing a button with a look or pouring out tea at a table high up near the ceiling, she remains the same - pliggish, correct and completely reliable. Her characteristic reaction is a superior snuff. Snap, snap go her heels along the pavement and even her back has an angry look. There is no argle-bargle with Mary Poppins. She is so vain that she has to admire herself in every shop window and she is as touchy as Griselda's dear cuckoo but somehow she is always right and the children know it.

Now after a long silence Mary Poppins is back and quite properly things have changed. *Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane* begins not with Jane

and Michael but the Park Keeper and this is no longer a children's world. It is Midsummer's Eve, the most magical night of the year, and the Park Keeper, scraps of cucumber sandwich behind his ears, walks backward with his eyes shut in search of his true love. (Things have changed so much that Mrs P. Sheppard's illustrations might almost be by Grey.) He bumps into Mary Poppins who is entertaining her friends to a picnic, which is attended by some of the stars and constellations, Orion, Castor and Pollux, Ursula Minor, the Fox in search of foxgloves and the Hare looking for parsley. Everything is head over heels tonight. Mr Banks the children's father is back in Mrs Cory's shop, white-collared and velvet-suited, his nose on a level with the counter and it is that Mary Poppins behind him! Nothing is quite what it seems and the air is full of echoes. Mary Poppins is still prime and her tongue is as sharp as ever but would the Mary Poppins that we used to know have taken the twins on a supper picnic? Annabel, perhaps, the sleep in the pram but surely not the twins. The day is over and in the wide unfamiliar darkness the bushes are crumpling shapes ready to spring.

This is a book for addicts who will remember "Pop goes the Weasel" played on a musical box in a littered work-room and recognize the Nightingale who sticks a shining feather into Mary Poppins's hat. To meet an old friend after long absence is always dangerous and she may have gained a new dimension but we are still in a world where handkerchiefs are handsome does and the best foot is one in front. Stars may come down from the sky and Orion wear a new sparkle in his belt but Mary Poppins remains triumphantly herself.

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Gollancz

The battle of the books

Nicholas Tucker

SHEILA RAY
The Blyton Phenomenon
Deutsch, £10.95.
0 233 97441 5

The title of this study is well-chosen: Enid Blyton's success, both during and after her life-time, still appears truly phenomenal. Nothing of its scale occurred before in children's literature, nor ever will probably again, now that television viewing has become so much more popular than reading. Yet Blyton-mania has received scant critical attention, despite the equally phenomenal growth of interest in children's literature also taking place in the last two decades.

All this should mean that this book at last fills an extraordinary gap, and as a bibliographical record it is certainly thorough. But having collected what must be almost every reference made to Blyton in print, the author was unwise to include so many of them here. Remarks gleaned from forty years of press reports and book reviews too often seem trivial or repetitive, and they are not even a particularly valid guide to current attitudes towards Blyton herself. Since for the author's M Phil theses on the same topic is not always sauce for the reader outside, and the first section of this study, subtitled *Enid Blyton and the Librarian*, should have been considerably edited.

Things improve when Sheila Ray takes a closer look at the stories themselves, comparing them to novels dealing with similar themes by more ambitious children's authors. Her conclusions do much to explain Blyton's success, and also the comparative popular failure of her more distinguished rivals. While all of them wrote for children, the image of childhood implicit in the works of

earlier authors, as well as those working in the same tradition since, is often very different. Most of them, for example, will at times address their audience in two contrasting ways, talking to readers as younger beings of limited understanding in one breath, and as adults in the making in the next. There are sound reasons for doing this, given that childhood is a transitory period of unequal emotional and intellectual development. Within it, children themselves have always shown evidence of mature and immature comprehension, both in the books they read and elsewhere.



One of Bill's methods for dealing with the mushroom-gatherer's bad-tempered children. An illustration from Bill the Minder, a collection of stories by W. Heath Robinson, which was first published in 1912 and has recently been reissued in a special limited edition of 500 copies by Hodder and Stoughton (254pp., £30, 0 340 27965 6).

When children's authors are accused of writing over the heads of their audience, therefore, it might be fairer to recognize that unless this is very overtone they are more accurately addressing the potential adult within every child. Alison Uttley, for example, does this through her use of history and tradition; A. A. Milne through his more sophisticated sense of humour; Kenneth Grahame through classical parody and Russell Hoban, in our own times, through satire of fashionable artistic modes. Most children won't understand all this straightaway, but occasional puzzlement is an inevitable feature of childhood, and within reason a spur towards greater understanding next time round.

While teachers, librarians and

parents sometimes objected to such heady and undemanding fare, children themselves fell on it with the enthusiasm they show for other child-centred products this century. Here, after all, was literature that made them feel big rather than small, peopled by child characters equal or superior to any adults who threatened to get in their way. As all this is skilfully narrated at a good lick in predictable language, and a young audience can become deliciously puffed up on two counts: both as fantasy super-heroes and also as adept readers of fiction. For getting to the end of a novel is also an adventure for the immature and unconfident, at last able to overcome the verbal obstacles that lie between them and the final page.

Looking back on it now, anyone who once knew the intoxication of tearing through a Blyton story in this way will not find it easy to condemn such a pleasurable experience. She was, at least in small doses, a marvellous writer for so many children, and given that life itself will always continue to cut young readers down to size elsewhere, there is little danger that identifying with the Famous Five or the Secret Seven can ever be more than harmless wish-fulfillment. Yet one can also understand the anxiety her books once caused. Too much Blyton could mean less time for the other, more intellectually stimulating authors who ask more of the reader and are therefore never going to be as popular in a culture that sees instant gratification as its most important goal.

At the same time, Blyton's strong social prejudices, although sometimes exaggerated by critics, are not helpful in preparing young readers for life in their own century. Lastly, she proved a poor friend to the cause of children's literature and those trying to promote it in schools, bookshops and libraries. Instead, her example helped give it the low esteem with most adult critics it is still struggling to shake off today.

But as Sheila Ray fairly concludes, the Blyton controversy has now run out of steam. Critics formerly shocked by her facile prose could not have predicted the even more impoverished entertainment that now exists for children on television (just as those who once railed against the *Daily Mirror* as the ultimate in vulgarization clearly never anticipated the possibility one day of a newspaper like *The Sun*). When the more blatant racist and class overtones are extracted from Blyton books, as they usually are in small literary case to be made for a few of her books – something Sheila Ray argues in her final chapters. A top ten critical selection from Britain's most controversial children's writer is certainly a sign of the times, as is the fact that the radical London bookshop, Centreprise, recently stocked some Famous Five stories because of the continuous demand for them. As for former rows about denying Blyton books shelf-space in public libraries, such decisions are now rendered unimportant by the existence of cheap paperback versions, often available in shops that hesitate to stock other children's books.

Yet if the battle over Blyton has largely resulted in a famous victory for Little Noddy and his friends, the arguments it once raised are not entirely over. It may be harder to attack her work now there is more objectionable material around for children both in print and in other media, but justifying the ascendancy of the bad by the existence of the still worse is a feeble argument. Sheila Ray's interesting study is a reminder of a time when there were still public arguments about the overall desirability of certain types of entertainment for children. Only the most blandly acquiescent optimist could hold that there is no longer any need for such debate about the dubious cultural climate we provide for children today.

commentary

The perpetual present of appetite

Peter Conrad

Falstaff
Coward Garden

Triumphantly progressing from Los Angeles to Florence by way of Covent Garden, undergoing immortalization on record and video-cassette, the production of *Falstaff* which brings Carlo Maria Giulini back to opera after twenty years may have the look of a pre-packaged and pre-acclaimed media event. It is not that, however. It is simply a great musical occasion: a *Falstaff* perfected by the infinite pains Giulini has taken over it, and by the assembling of an unmatchable cast.

The production began as a project of (and has been recorded with) the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra. Giulini's notion of the work is therefore symphonic. He has even jokingly proposed that it could be played in the absence of the singers, and the drama has migrated to the pit. The orchestra here constitutes a *world* – a thriving comic society, a thriving populous landscape. Its rhythmic energy and grace transcribe the ubiquitous manoeuvrings of the comic spirit, that melioristic god personified by the positivist nineteenth century. It's an unpausing score, never evolving. It exists in the perpetual present of appetite and its instant gratifications. This, together with the delicacy and refinement on which Giulini insists, links it with *Don Giovanni*. Both are the music of desire in an unflagging quest of its prey, destined to look back.

There's never any brassy pompousness in the playing. For Falstaff's monologues, the orchestra assumes a discreet, whispering, over-the-shoulder music: it is intruding on his private self-scrutiny, and scarcely dare make audible his fears of his imminent discomfiture and demise. As in *Don Giovanni*, the arduous and eager isolation of Verdi's hero are his anxious outracing of death, his desperate seizure of the day. At Giulini's best, the pleasures of sense in which Falstaff trusts can be heard evaporating or expiring, just as Don Giovanni's warm flesh is menaced by cold retributive stone. A grave opens in the orchestra pit when Falstaff reads to himself the list of his own resources. The whole strokes of the clock in the midnight forest, enumerated by the gaudy Falstaff, are another auditory map of reckoning. The dying of day outside the inn, as the sun fades from the brick wall and Quickly terrifies Falstaff with her fable of the banished man before disappearing to call the living of life. The *Alm vilva* dances above an abyss. This is why – to the amusement of critics reared on the *Interpretations* of Soli or the *Leid* of Geraint Evans – the *Interpretation* of Falstaff is played and sung (by the Falstaff of Renato Brunson) so reflectively. It is, in Giulini's interpretation, a meditation on the last things, and a dance of death under it in the orchestra.

Falstaff here inspects his own end and notices it. Therefore, when the final *tracolla* swells up, it embodies, like the revivifying trill when Falstaff does himself with wine, a brave victory over mortal alarm: it is the heroic nonchalance of Don Giovanni, who refuses to repent or mourn.

Giulini denies that *Falstaff* is an *opera buffa*. Its humour is the resolute banishing of a pain and fear which *opera buffa* simply excludes. Thus his orchestra never parodies the sentiments of the characters, but validates them. When Quickly tells Falstaff that Alice is distracted with love of him and laments over her as a "povera donna", the strings weep in commiseration. The jealous Ford is ejected from comedy altogether during his monologue. His wife's stratagem to keep him alive by whatever means, the agency which effects this is not a mere practical joke – rather it's a wise, humbling and humanizing demonstration that we are all liable to err. An admission of one's own folly, in this work, entitles one to salvation.

Falstaff, far from *opera buffa*, comes close to being a divine comedy. In this respect Ronald Eyre's production, drab until the final scene, makes some sense: it is the *perpetual present* of the acute points. Falstaff in the wood is the victim of an *auto-da-fé*. Infernal

the house lights – all the rest of us to his philosophy of ludic inconsequence. Giulini darkens the score so that this eventual lightening can seem a hard-won, nearly-missed redemption. As a similar experiment with comedy's power to recover from tragedy, Alice takes up Mistress Quickly's narrative of the huntsman – that revenant who, like Mozart's Commendatore, represents the punitive recurrence of eternity in human time – and finishes it as a nonsensical fable, giggling at its facetious terrors. When the characters of *Falstaff* laugh, it's because they are laughing something off. Hence, when the play is played with Giulini's care for detail, the sextuple "No" with which Alice and Nanetta dispute Ford's project to marry the girl to Dr

cardinals pacing on stilts preside over his inquisition, while he's jabbed with flaming brands. The women kneel to plead that he be rendered chaste and impotent; Falstaff himself unregenerately begs that his abdomen be spared. The comic character is here subjected to tragic arraignment. But Falstaff has the verdict commuted. There is moral grandeur, as against the impudence of a Volpone soliciting the audience to free him with its applause, in the way Falstaff literally authorizes his own persecution by claiming to be not only witty in himself but the cause of wit in others. Moments before, recoiling from the sound of the bell and the spells of the fairies, he'd been a mortal in dread of damnation. Now he is a comic god who, no longer craving

abundant body that he can alter it simply by wishing to do so. Singing is an artistic miracle staged inside the body yet transcending it: thus Brunson, describing his leanness when a page in the Duke of Norfolk's service, squeezes the word "sottile" (which denotes his slenderness) as he utters it, enacting it so as to earn the right then to rhyme it with "gentile". Gentility is also a quality this Falstaff can properly claim. He greets Quickly with courtesy deference, and even though he under-rips her he sings his salutation with such impeccable vocal manners that he's at once forgiven. Geraint Evans, dressing for his erotic embassy to Alice, always made a decrepit fool of himself. Brunson, newly costumed in white for this outing, looks magnificent. Instead of a joke, a searching human point has been made: the delicious falsetto of Falstaff's "Vado a farmi bello" contrasts his contented self-love with Ford's marauding self-disgust. Nor are his sexual adventures absurd. When planning his conquest of Alice in the inn or serenading her as she plays the lute, he sings with the softness of a hand attempting a preliminary, tentative caress.

In the nineteenth century, comedy comes to be a biological contest: it ordains the survival of the fittest, the Bergsonian freedom of a vital instinct which won't be arrested. The orchestra is where that victory occurs and Giulini, by sympathetically congregating the action there, enrolls the singers in its community. Tragedy individualizes, but comedy is about our collective destiny. Therefore, whereas Falstaff stands apart, Giulini marshals the rest of the soloists into two opposed factions, which in the opera's great ensembles – the plotting in Ford's garden, and the search through his house – sing against one another. The antagonistic groups are the men and the women. The women are either, like the men, rude earth. The women are comically glib and adept, the men immersed in obsession. The women fuss over their domestic linen, the men amass their weapons. The women purvey consolation, the men demand revenge. Cries of feminine comfort from the Alice of Katia Ricciarelli alternate with the howlings of masculine rage from the Ford of Leo Nucci; at the end of the garden scene, Falstaff's bulk tumescens in the orchestra and then, when the women sing "e poi crepa", noisily deflates male ponderousness, capsize by female jostling. *Falstaff* draws near to Shaw's evolutionary theory of comedy. Instead of dramatizing the pursuit of man by woman or vice versa, it celebrates the natural law which impels that pursuit. The ensemble in Ford's house is instigated by a sound which is non-musical but which begets music: the kiss from behind the screen where Fenton and Nanetta are in hiding.

Victor Maurel, who created the role of Falstaff and subsequently sang it in New York and London in 1895. This photograph, from the Mander and Mitchinson Theatre Collection, is reproduced in the English National Opera Royal Opera Guide to Falstaff (128pp. John Calder, £2.00, 0 711 3921 X) tenth in a series under the editorship of Nicholas John. It contains critical essays, a thematic guide, a discography and bibliography and a full libretto with English translation by Andrew Porter. Three other recently-released titles in the series are *Falstaff at Melandri* (0 7145 3906 6), Boris Godunov (0 7145 3922 8) and *Der fliegende Holländer* (0 7145 3920 1).

Caus can sound like a resistant, grandiloquently pardoned everyone else. The fugue is judgment day on which everyone's sins are remitted: as Giulini plays it, it's a joyful counterpart to the "Sanctus" in Verdi's *Requiem*. Though Giulini has said he could do without singers, he couldn't have accomplished this renovation of the soprano altitudes of Alice and Nanetta and the baritone underground of Falstaff and Ford, is suspended in a truce. Fenton perhaps is wiser even than Falstaff, for while Falstaff traffics in appetite, which satiates itself and suffers exhaustion or expiry, Fenton's sonnet in the final scene speaks of appetite reproducing itself on art. This lover's lips exhale a musical note which unites in the air with another note. Married and doubled, this musical satisfaction doesn't die but, as Nanetta says, renews itself like the moon. Art, in contrast with the gustatory ephemera on which the fat knight feeds, is the perpetuity of pleasure. The libertine's career, despite *Don Giovanni*, need not end tragically. Giulini's *Falstaff* admittedly contains no belly laughs: it does, however, enshrine this truth, which is the highest assurance of comedy.

Down and out in Times Square

Alan Jenkins

GEORGE SELDEN
The Cricket in Times Square
Illustrated by Garth Williams
Kestrel, £4.95.
0 7226 5799 4

A cricket, drawn by the scent of a piece of liverwurst, jumps in a picnic-basket, fails to get out again, and is brought thus from its tree-stump home in Connecticut to a garbage-strewn corner of the subway station beneath New York's Times Square.

Things are not as bad as they seem; Chester Cricket is picked up and dusted down in orthodox Samaritan fashion by Mario, the son of Mama and Papa Bollini who keep the news-stand on the station, then given a bed for the night in a matchbox. The scene is watched by Tucker Mouse, denizen of Times Square's drainpipes (long dry, we presume), who befriends Chester forthwith – even providing a bedtime liverwurst snack – and introduces him to the genial Harry Cat. The three strike up an instant rapport.

Things are not as good as they seem; the news-stand business is in a depressed state; Papa prides himself on stocking the "quality" magazines (*Musical America*, *Art News*) but can't sell even the *Times* and *Mama* fears "the cricketer feeds" – peculiar "diseases". Mario's pleas and Papa's kindly resignation to the question "What do we want with a cricket?" the only answer is "What do we want with a news-stand?" prevail, and the cricket becomes a permanent lodger. But all is far from well as yet.

A wise old Chinaman provides a pagoda cricket-cage and some advice on diet – not, however, before Chester has dreamed that he is eating a leaf and munched his way through a two-dollar bill. Tucker, a prudent and prosperous mouse, is called upon to bail Mario out of some heavy-duty grocery deliveries and Chester out of his pagoda jail (the

has the heart of a country-cricket, a Huck Finn of crickets; it is Tucker who finds the thing irresistibly luxurious). A wider cricket-mouse-cat sort of party precipitates a bigger crisis, though, as things get out of hand and a fire is started.

This time it looks like curtains for Chester, the news-boy's chum; until, that is, kindly Mr. Smedley the music teacher discovers the creature's exquisite musical ability and writes to the *Times* a letter vaunting its prodigious genius for "symphonic, operatic and popular tunes". Even Mama's heart melts at Chester's rendering of "Torn-a Sorrento".

Things get even mellow as the letter draws a few curious commuters to Chester's impromptu concerts; before long musical America is flocking to hear *Aida* for single cricket, and to buy newspapers from the stall. But September comes around, the Huck Finn heart of Chester bankers for the colours of a Connecticut Fall, and he takes his last ride through the New York streets on Harry's back to Grand Central, where he catches the Late Local Express.

Anyone expecting a combination of *Wind in the Willows* and *Arctur's* life of melancholy will be disappointed. Characterization, human and animal, is thinish (though Tucker and Harry rib along in a convincing way), and not a single opportunity to inject a wistful or heartwarming note is missed. There are a few good New York touches – Mama's Little Italy inflections are a delight – but too few; the rattle of subways, the clutter of the news-stand, the menu for a meal in Chinatown and the detailed detritus any agile mouse might reasonably expect to salvage from a subway floor and furnish a drainpipe with, are all George Selden offers by way of realistic backdrop to his fantasy, for which the word is quite definitely "oharming".

The book, first published in 1960, is well on its way to becoming a classic in the United States; but the really frightening thing about it now is the innocence of its given world, where a

little boy can be left alone in charge of a news-stand a cat's whisker away from Times Square with money in the cash-register (permanently open), where a sympathetic shuttle-train driver pays twenty-five cents over the top for a newspaper, where a soda-jerk dispenses free strawberry soda to cricket and boy indiscriminately. This is a world which depends for its

existence on a determined assumption of universal niceness, a programmatic ignorance of flesh-pots and peep-shows. Reading *The Cricket in Times Square* we enter a time-war, we cross back over the wall of Eden. As we do reading *Wind in the Willows* (or, for that matter, *Wodehouse* or, in his different way, Raymond Chandler); the problem is that here we have

something of the Ratty-Mole scenario with none of the satisfying textures and ironies of their ménage, or the variety shows. Reading *The Cricket in Times Square* we enter a time-war, we cross back over the wall of Eden. As we do reading *Wind in the Willows* (or, for that matter, *Wodehouse* or, in his different way, Raymond Chandler); the problem is that here we have

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New Oxford books: Reference

A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary

Volume III, O-Scz
Edited by H.W. Burchfield

When the first volume of the Supplement to the OED was published in 1972 the T.L.S. reviewer said that its appearance is no doubt the most important event in English lexicography since the completion of OED itself. Volume II received equal attention and acclaim on its publication in 1978. The third volume takes the Supplement well into the letter S, the most productive letter of the alphabet. The fourth volume, due for publication in 1985, will complete the work. £55

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English

Edited by J.B. Sykes

This new edition of the classic single volume dictionary, benefiting from over 100 years of Oxford scholarship (*Good Book Guide*) includes many accessions to the language that have come into prominence in the six years since the publication of the radically revised sixth edition, on which it is based. It contains entries for over 40,000 headwords, with a total of some 75,000 vocabulary items including derivatives, compounds, and abbreviations. Seventh edition £7.75 thumb Indexed £9.50

The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Greek

English-Greek
Compiled by J.T. Pring

This concise English-Modern Greek dictionary is the complementary volume to the author's Greek-English dictionary, first published in 1965. Equivalents of English words and phrases are given in colloquial everyday Greek, and the various meanings of English words are carefully distinguished and reflected in the redefining. £6.50

The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Greek

Greek-English/
English-Greek
Compiled by J.T. Pring

This combined volume meets the need for a compact, up-to-date dictionary suitable for general reference and the language student. It is designed primarily for English-speaking users, but will also be a valuable aid to Greek speakers who wish to improve their understanding of English. £9.50

A Bibliography of Jane Austen

David Gilson

David Gilson's bibliography of Jane Austen was at first intended as a revised edition of Sir Geoffrey Keynes's 1928 *Nonesuch Press* bibliography, but while retaining and expanding the original book's structure it is in most respects a new work. £50 *Soho Bibliographies*

Oxford University Press

Robert Graves

Sir, - Ms Jackson's letter (July 16) about my biography of Robert Graves speaks for itself.

The book has been read because people are interested in Robert Graves; it does not "villify" her. But while I do not care what abuse Ms Jackson cares to pour out on me, I must comment on the slur on the integrity of my publishers, Hutchinson. This firm would not associate itself with any mere "worthless assemblage of perverse invention".

There is nothing inaccurate in the book about Ms Jackson's later husband. Years did not introduce him to the "Irish Parliament" as "the coming young American poet", but Ms Jackson did, as we know from her miscellany, *Epilogue*, and from Graves' diary, celebrate the great Irish poet's demise with a special lunch at Rennes on February 11 1938, having called him "louthsome".

MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH.
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Robert Fergusson

Sir, - James Campbell's review of my book *Literature and Gentility in Scotland* (July 7) is largely his own summary of part of the Scottish literary history that the book discusses. The difficulty with this kind of review is that it is not clear to the reader whether the views expressed are those found in the book or those of the reviewer. I should therefore like to make it quite clear that one point at least made by Campbell is not mine but his and that I reject it totally. He says that discussion of Fergusson's poetry "often carries the suggestion that writing in Scots was for him a form of high spirits, something reserved for descriptions of his slumming". My discussion of Fergusson carried no such suggestion, for the reverse is in fact true. Fergusson's Scots poems at their best have a gravitas lacking in his English poems and his high spirits manifest themselves mostly in his burlesque poems in English.

Mr Campbell says that I "boast"

that the text of my book is exactly that of the orally delivered lectures. I did not "boast" of this fact; I simply stated it; the statement could more logically be construed as a confession of laziness.

DAVID DAICHES.
9 Randolph Crescent, Edinburgh.

'The Mathematical Experience'

Sir, - May I muddy a little further the waters in which both Roger Penrose and Jonathan Lear have been wading (Letters, June 25)? Lear says, "a Platonist is a realist who believes that mathematical statements are true or false in virtue of the existence of abstract objects" and also that "an antirealist may believe... that mathematical statements are not true or false independently of human judgment because he thinks that mathematical truths depend in part on complex and deep facts about the structure of the human mind." This appears to overlook, however accidentally, another interesting position, namely that of the antirealist Platonist. He believes that mathematical statements are true only if provable, and false only if refutable, and, moreover, that they are so by virtue (in part) of complex and deep facts about the structure of a realm of abstract objects. The question that immediately arises is how he can deny that every statement is either true or false independently of communicable grounds for such judgments, while yet maintaining that a statement's being provable depends (in part) on the structure of this independently existing realm of abstract objects. But the same difficulty would face Lear's antirealist who substitutes complex and deep facts about the human mind for similar facts about abstract objects.

Lear, however, is right in his criticism of Penrose. It is worth adding to it the observation that Gödel's theorem is constructively provable, hence eminently available to the intuitionist or antirealist for philosophical reflection. Gödel's theorem may reinforce the intuitionist's refusal formally to delimit in advance the admissible methods whereby one can

prove statements about numbers. Indeed, once a formal system is thus prematurely specified, the method of Gödel's proof may be used to produce a statement provably unprovable in that system, but provable in a wider sense not captured by that system. But whether the essential incompleteness of arithmetic forces upon one the view that it's all because numbers are abstract objects or because the human mind is a deep and complex thing is not so clear.

N. W. TENNANT,
Department of Philosophy, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland.

'Burke's Country Houses'

Sir, - *Burke's Country Houses*, which your reviewer John Buxton (April 30) kindly called "an invaluable collection of photographs", is now facing dormancy, if not extinction. The series, of which I am general editor, aims to record 10,000 or so family seats, standing and demolished, in the British Isles; thus far three volumes have appeared and a further nine are planned. However, the publishers have been unable to proceed with Volume 4 (covering the North-West) since Savills, the sponsors of Volumes 2 and 3, decided last autumn that they would not sponsor further volumes. New sponsorship has been sought, so far in vain.

Mr Buxton points out that this

series "should help to prevent the destruction, through ignorance, of those smaller manor houses and their like, which... are one of the chief riches in the English heritage, and were the chief source of patronage of the arts". I write in the hope that there may be a patron among your readers who can come forward to save this series.

HUGH MONTGOMERY-MASSINGBERD,
137 Kennington Park Road, London SE11.

Roget's Thesaurus

Sir, - Anthony Quinton, in his review (June 4) of the new Longman edition of *Roget's Thesaurus*, is of course perfectly entitled to mention that he was brought up on the Everyman edition. But he writes of the version "put out in 1912 and with revisions in 1925 and 1930", rather implying that Everyman stopped there. He appears to be unaware of the substantially revised new edition which was prepared by D. C. Browning in 1952 ("Every paragraph has been carefully reviewed, over 10,000 words and phrases have been added, and the articles have been 'tidied up' so that all additions follow the logical order which agrees with the original plan"). This was again revised in 1962 and 1971.

ELIZABETH NEWLANDS.
J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, Aldine House, 33 Welbeck Street, London W1.

Cats and Ovens

Sir, - Though I can't see that it matters much even in the annals of academic triviality, let me answer a point in Charles Causley's review of *Freedom of the Parish* (May 28) and the letter from Gordon Messing of the Department of Classics in Cornell University (July 16). Charles Causley was wrong in making me author of a remark that kittens born in ovens are not buns. This scornful truism was shot at me by my mother more than sixty years ago, as reported in my autobiographical book *The Crest on the Silver*. So I wasn't copying William Plomer, despite the copying of Mr Messing, and William Plomer wasn't copying me, and kittens and buns or biscuits isn't drawing "upon some anonymous hoard of inherited literary wisecracks", only on the common English hoard of useful aphorisms.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON,
Broad Town Farmhouse, Broad Town, Swindon, Wiltshire.

We regret that through an editorial error the title of Ignazio Silone's first novel was given as *Pan e vino* in Filippo Donini's review of *Severina* on April 30. *Pontamora* was Silone's first novel, *Pan e vino* (the correct title) his second.

Transatlantic Book Service are the UK distributors of *The Letters of Arthur Henry Hallam* (£29.25) and *Lady Tennyson's Journal* (£16.25), reviewed in the TLS, May 14.

Saving the Theatre Museum

Julie Hankey

Anyone who has done theatre research in this country has probably wondered about the cost of flights to Washington and New York. It is a sad irony that here, where our standard in the performing arts is internationally acclaimed, the largest theatre collections we possess should be buried in store or piled up in a few crowded rooms with scarcely a spare corner to look at them. What is sadder, but typical enough of these cost-effective times, is that the value of having any kind of theatre museum, and of the research that such a museum would make possible, should be regarded as negligible. That in effect is what the paragraphs on the Theatre Museum in the Rayner Scrutiny make plain.

Mr Gordon Burrett, who wrote them, obviously thinks that theatrical collections are rather jolly - "attractive" and "delightful" are his words - but he cannot for the life of him see what there is in them to study: "the possibilities for research which is both possible and fulfilled in this field is also less than in others", he says. Perhaps if he could be taken through the Theatre Museum's collection of 40,000 books on every aspect of the theatre, if he could examine the boxes of press-cuttings, if he could glance into the prompt-books of Garrick, Kean, Irving, Shaw and so on into the twentieth century, he would see what a vast amount of sheer human history is gathered there.

As surely as in the furniture and china, in the paintings, statues, and artefacts of every kind in other museums, these fragments of the theatre represent what we were and are like. The impact on its first audiences like *The Impact on its first audiences* says as much in that way as do the parliamentary debates in *Hamlet*. A performance of a Shakespeare play in the 1930s compared with another of the same play thirty years later measures changes in us of taste and thought and feeling with rare sensitivity. Because the theatre is alive, a corporate act involving not only actors and directors but house-full after house-full of public, the tone it takes and the reactions it provokes are a peculiarly immediate reflection of the atmosphere and preoccupations of the day. But by the very nature of the art, these performances, and their audiences are not extant like

paintings, furniture and Hansard. They can be reconstructed, but only painstakingly, by going through prompt-books, sitting reviews, reading out-of-the-way collections of theatre reminiscences, looking at pictures, costumes, and scenery - in short by using the resources of a theatre museum. "The scope for research which is both possible and justified in this field" is immense.

But now, if Mr Burrett's recommendations are followed, all the material owned by the Theatre Museum is to remain in limbo, in packing cases or in a dust-sheeted, heap-up, back-stage kind of existence in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Apart from the great loss to the public in general, and to theatre researchers, this puts the Theatre Museum itself into an invidious position. It is under an obligation to make available and to exhibit to their best advantage collections which have been donated on the express understanding that proper facilities would be found. In 1955, the British Theatre Museum Association donated its holdings, based on the Henry Irving archives; the Friends of the Museum of Performing Arts donated its collection of Diailley costumes and scenery; in 1975 Dame Bridget D'Oyly Carte made over her material; two unique collections of circus memorabilia, the Hippisley Coxo and the Bertram Mills Collections, were another donation. The list goes on, covering every aspect of the theatre. Most recently, Dame Marie Rambert has made her bequest to the Museum. It is certain that none of these gifts would have been made had there been the least suspicion that in so doing the donors were consigning them to oblivion, and it follows that there is now a legal question as to whether the Museum should continue to hold these collections. Their worth is estimated at £23 million, and there would be eager bidders in America and elsewhere to display them in, anyone wishing to dispose of theatrical material in the future could scarcely do worse than to drop them into Rayner's oubliette.

But until last month, there was never any question but that the Museum would be publicly supported in a building suitable for study and exhibition. In 1971 the government agreed that this should be so, and though cut-backs have prevented progress, the principle has been confirmed by each government since then. When the Flower Market in Covent Garden became vacant, it was the obvious choice. There, within a couple of minutes of the theatres that figure so prominently in our stage history, and among the tourist-filled shops and cafés, was to be a permanent exhibition telling the story of the English theatre from Shakespeare to the RSC; two rotating exhibitions on particular subjects, as it might be "lighting", "pantomime", "stage design", "Laurence Olivier" and so on; a small gallery of paintings and sculptures; a seventy-five seat theatre for talks, performances, and workshops; and for researchers, proper study facilities. With a café, a shop, and a bar, the prospect is indeed attractive, and the museum estimates 200,000 visitors a year, with an incalculable spin-off for the theatre in general from the increased knowledge and interest which it will create among the public, especially the young.

Mr Burrett (who, it emerges, did not consult specialists in the field, or look at the work of foreign theatre museums) thinks £4.3 million in capital costs (out of a total annual expenditure of £106,000 million) too great a price to pay. He thinks private initiative should foot the bill. In fact "private initiative" is responsible for almost all the £23 million worth of original collecting, exhibitions, and entrance fees, at least to the Museum itself. No doubt the government is not to take any part in recording, preserving, and making available to the public the achievements of one of the most interesting aspects of our national life, what are the arguments for subsidizing the performing arts at all? If they matter on the night, then they will matter in retrospect. Every other country in Europe, and major cities in America, Australia, and the Soviet Union have theatre museums. There are in this country individual theatre collections in other hands, Ellen Terry's, for example, and the Mander and Mitchinson Collection; and for the study of Shakespeare there are excellent libraries in Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon. But we have no comprehensive theatre museum as such. In that respect London cannot compare with Leipzig, or even Barcelona, let alone with Washington; and yet there are the collections, the plans, the imagination, and, potentially, the building to repair this disgrace.

Containing the progressives

David A. Martin

EDWARD SHILS

Tradition
33pp. Faber, £15.
0 571 11756 2

There is no doubt that the conventional image of the political stance of sociologists is lop-sided or, to use a northern expression, cack-handed. If you think only of some of the most distinguished practitioners of the discipline, Martin Lipset, Robert Nisbet, Daniel Bell, Raymond Aron, Peter Berger - and Edward Shils - they are best described as liberal conservatives. By that I mean that which they conjoin with a concern for the moral densities and organic order of social life. They respect families, schools, churches, and the network of voluntary association. The same was true of the most important influence of the previous generation, Talcott Parsons. He had a profound sense of the way shared values hold society in being, whatever the importance of political interest and congeries of power.

Edward Shils is the direct heir to the mantle of Parsons. He is a man of fabled learning, whose mind purrs powerfully like the moth at dusk. I hesitate to use the word conservative of him because it misses the central concern of his work, which is not conservatism, but the conservation of those human resources and achievements which are richest, and matter most. He cares about continuities and the settled frames within which human beings can put down roots and grow. He detests fertile trepidation, the kind of brittle rationality which shies the reasons of the heart and the reason which propels the pulse of human association. That is why his T. S. Eliot lectures, delivered at the University of Kent in 1974, focused on tradition. There is in Eliot, whether or not you accept his Anglo-Catholic Royalism, a useful sociology of the nature of tradition to which Shils gives here an overt professional expression.

Tradition is about long duration, and about modes of practice and activity which have been worked out against the hard edges of human limitation. It is on that account extremely difficult to write about, because the question of what will work in the long run, given our built-in limits, is almost coextensive with sociology itself. At any rate, it is presumably the reason why so few sociologists have been willing to discuss tradition head-on. The most powerful force in human affairs, literally the capacity to hand on and hand over, has been ignored, because you do not know where to begin or end. But there is more to regret than that. Not only is tradition a subject which enters into almost every other matter of sociological concern, as Shils points out, but the residue left by its ubiquity can be treated as a residual factor. No doubt the residue is wide-ranging and powerful but it can all be swept under "historical factors" or difficult notions like "national character", or treated as "assimilation". At any rate, since it is true that the number of sociologists do not much care for what has been "handed on", their main interest has been in modes of destruction or modification rather than modes of sustenance and renewal. They have been of that faction within the Party of Humanity which responds to the ignition of the library and Alexandria with delight. "The memory of mankind! A shameful memory. Let it burn!"

To write about tradition, memory and animus is to trace subtle processes of storage, to delineate the conservation, renewal and extension of stocks, the making of canons, the institutional organisms like universities or sects find themselves niches among inhospitable stocks. It is also to write about certain modes of apprehension, many of which are on the respect accorded the dead. How is reverence built

up, how is the paradigmatic act formed and fixed, where does the constraining style originate, who are the accredited curators of what is to count as reputable, worthy, wise and deserving of honour? What objects and artifacts enable humans to commune across time and pass what is precious along a chain of being? How do we become historically aligned?

Immediately the questions are posed in this way, one is conscious of the major problem underlying this book, which is to distinguish the differences and the similarities between the various modes of transmission. Part of Shils's object, of course, is to stress the fact that there are vital similarities. The traditions of science, of humane learning, of political procedure and revolution, of artistic practice and style, of craft and all kinds of making, of human association, ritual and of religious faith, all have important elements in common. Neither evolutionary change nor revolutionary upheaval can occur or survive without modes of persistence and storage and settled procedures for securing the alterations achieved. That is why revolutionary societies become extremely traditional. So there is a vast area where all the modalities of maintenance are shared. Even scientific knowledge, especially since Kuhn established the tradition of viewing "normal science" in terms of heaving within established paradigms, can be viewed as work done according to fiercely defended traditions.

But, in that case, what are the differences? What goes on when the Pope defines the Assumption as *de fide* for Roman Catholics is presum-

ably not the same as what goes on when the giving of the Nobel Prize recognizes a new scientific advance. Science has a canon of approved activity and examination, but it does not carry forward Newtonian concepts as such, it retests them. Yet that is not the end of the matter because, on the one hand, religious traditions discard and on the other scientific traditions conserve, so we must ask ways in which discarding and conservation take place. A university has a canon of knowledge at the core of the curriculum of humane learning, but how does the securing of that canon differ from the religious deployment of the canon of sacred scripture?

These are the issues with a multitude of persuasive and illuminating examples in Shils's book. However, in pointing up the common strands that inform all traditions, and in underscoring the importance of tradition as such, Shils has an evaluative as well as a descriptive aim in mind. When he comes to Chapter Nine, "The Prospects of Tradition", and to Chapter Ten, "The Permanent Task", he is really trying to edge our assessments of the dominant tradition of the Enlightenment in a more realistic, balanced direction. In this his objective runs oddly parallel to that of Leszek Kolakowski in his recent book entitled *Religion*. These chapters are plainly prescriptive and directed towards the crisis which afflicts us because of the failures in the Enlightenment programme, whether they are experienced by progressivists or by out-and-out radicals.

Shils is conscious all the time of the huge improvements achieved through the implementation of the programme advanced by the Party of Humanity. But the contradictions in the programme are now clear, the limits exposed, the evil potentialities and excesses realized, and the deeper, less obvious preconditions of the advances more fully canvassed. What Shils wants to argue, given all that may be said for what he calls the previous achievements of the tradition of emancipation, is that these very achievements depended for their function on the continued existence of the elements which they attacked and scorned. In the first place "The success which the Enlightenment achieved was owed to its becoming a tradition". But secondly, and equally important, "It was successful against its enemies because the enemies were strong enough to resist its complete victory over them. Living on a soil of substantive traditionality, the ideas of the Enlightenment advanced without undoing themselves." The programme of the progressivists did not "ravage society as it would have done had society lost all legitimacy".

In other words, traditions contain and therefore make viable the progressive programme. But progressivists easily suppose that it is just this pervasive, undergirding support system which prevents their programme becoming more, more fruitful and victorious beyond all shadow of contradiction. So this is why progressivism is so dangerous - dangerous to humanity and itself - not because it seeks liberality or even liberation, but because it does not recognize the frames and continuities on which these aims depend. The weight pressing on the brain of the living is often the underpinning which the past

gives to the very possibility of future. So a conservative in this style, the style of Shils, is not one who wants to bang mallets and flog little boys, but one whose sense of the possibilities and limits of progress are grounded in the things that progressivists regard as irritants and blockages.

I would append one footnote to this. Shils, for all his attachment to the canon of humane learning, and his exemplification of the canon of sociology, especially Weber, remains an American liberal. He knows how important conservation is and how change rests on continuity, but the rhetoric towards which his mind naturally gravitates for the expression of his deepest convictions is American individualistic liberality. He is, of course, quite unusually aware of the defects, and of the opaque, arrogant blindness exemplified (say) by progressive educationalists, and he spends his intellectual energies pricking their pride and predicting their downfall. He is irritated by the appalling, constricted traditionality of their style of thought and their built-in reactions. But he is a liberal all the same. I would describe him as a *mid-atlantic* liberal, not a *trans-atlantic* liberal. He speaks somewhere of neo-conservatives who nevertheless cannot even really imagine what it would be to unthink the Enlightenment programme. Those are the real transatlantic liberals, and when you talk to them you realize that your deployment of the same words is being organized into different sets, without them knowing it. There is real tradition for you! Shils, of course, can unthink the Enlightenment programme. But *au fond* he doesn't choose to.

Constraining the agents

Frank Parkin

PHILIP ABRAMS

Historical Sociology
353pp. Open Books. £12 (paperback £6).
0 729 10111 8

Economical talk about some form of union between history and sociology has been going on for what feels like a long time. Enthusiasts for the marriage have faced a difficult task trying to convince their colleagues of its benefits. It might have been easier for them if they had encountered some exciting opposition; sheer indifference is harder to cope with. Part of the trouble has been that the advocates of a closer union appeared to be a lot stronger on exhortation than on demonstration. If the fusion of historical narrative and social theory was so full of potential, why was no one actually fulfilling it?

In recent years a number of books have appeared which have sought to deliver the goods. Mostly, these have been books by sociologists dealing with big historical events, such as revolutions. Noticeably fewer have been by historians captivated by the charms of sociology. Philip Abrams' *Historical Sociology* is the most recent and persuasive attempt so far to advertise these views. Abrams presents a synoptic view of, and lively commentary upon, the work of scholars who think and write about the past in a theoretically informed manner, over their disciplinary allegiance. Work of this kind, he suggests, has been produced on a far greater scale than is generally supposed. Many people, it seems, have been writing historical sociology without quite realizing it.

Indeed, it would be difficult for them to avoid doing so, given Abrams' catholic notion of this activity. Historical sociology, he tells us, is not the product of a final triumphant liaison between two erstwhile separate disciplines. There can be no liaison, or any kind of relationship, between history and sociology for the simple reason that, reduced to their essentials, "history and sociology are and always have been the same thing".

They are the same thing in the sense that people who call themselves historians and sociologists employ the same logic of enquiry. The best of them, at least, seek to explain social events as an outcome of the permanent tension between human agency and the structural constraints that impose limits upon the range of action. The sociologist is forced to take account of the past because all present conduct takes place within a moral and institutional setting bequeathed us by previous generations. Imagine trying to explain the British constitution without reference to the legacy of colonialism and plantation slavery.

The historian, in turn, requires a grasp of social theory because past events can only be ordered and comprehended through the conceptual and explanatory devices that theory makes available. Given that past and present are indivisible, and that narrative and theory are wholly complementary, there can be no rational justification for the formal separation of history and sociology in the academic division of labour.

Abrams argues all this with his customary panache and good temper. It is hard to believe, though, that his words will fall as sweetly on the ears of historians as upon the ears of his fellow sociologists. After all, sociologists can hardly avoid examining the past, because what happened earlier this morning is the past in the sense as what happened in the Tudor period. Historians, on the other hand, can steer clear of sociological theory without doing themselves injury.

Abrams would deny this on the grounds that history is not just a factual presentation of the past but the social reconstruction of the past. Events cannot be made to speak for themselves; we hear the voices from the past only through the distorting medium of the historian's own accounts. Abrams is thus predictably sceptical of the aims of past historians associated with the History Workshop school. Their dedication to the "recovery of subjective experience" - the interpretation of the past as the actors themselves perceived it - is understood it - is thoroughly misconceived. People in the thick of events, Abrams says, are not always aware of their own motives for action; so that any account of what happened

emanating from this source is a rickety foundation upon which to build an explanation. "The past can only be known through a conscious effort to theorise it." Historians must impose their own meaning upon events, not accept it ready-made from elsewhere. Since they do this anyway, however purely factual they claim to be, Abrams would like them to reflect upon and publicly reveal the theoretical assumptions that lie embedded in their narrative accounts.

There are at least a couple of reasons why historians should pause before accepting Abrams' invitation to enter a state of sociological consciousness. One is that there is nothing resembling a coherent body of social thought waiting to find empirical employment. Sociology is in profound conceptual disarray. There is hardly any common agreement on the definition and use of terms that are supposed to be the discipline's stock-in-trade. More importantly, there are many and conflicting views about the very nature of social knowledge and our capacity for apprehending it.

It should perhaps be said that this state of affairs is neither remediable nor cause for deep despair. Sociology actively thrives upon its own internal contradictions. The endless arguments about the best kind of theoretical apparatus to use in making sense of social reality seem to be of greater fascination than any substantive piece of that reality. Whereas historians appear to regard events themselves as having considerable intrinsic interest, sociologists are likely to be more concerned with how the account of such events might be harnessed to some conceptual or theoretical wrangle, engendered within their own discipline. Unlike, say, the church historian, what intrigues the sociologist about the matter of papal succession is how it could be used to fuel the debate about "charisma" or "bureaucracy". Abrams' case for historical sociology contains, in effect, a plea to historians to reorder their priorities along similar lines.

This touches upon the second reason why historians could reasonably decide to shrug off the sociological embrace. Namely, that the kinds of issues defined by historians as problematic would neither be resolved nor clarified by an excursion into social theory. From Max Weber

onwards, the unhelpful message to the historian from the sociologist has been that what are conventionally treated as social facts are, in large measure, arbitrary creations of the investigator. Facts are not "out there" waiting to be unearthed and explained, they are made visible or concealed by the conceptual lenses through which social reality is viewed in the first place. Replace one set of conceptual lenses by another and a quite different cluster of social facts is brought into focus. Moreover, there is no way of deciding between the conflicting explanatory claims of different conceptual lenses or theoretical models. The issue cannot be settled by an appeal to the high court of empirical reality, because each model constructs the factual order in a manner that underwrites its own validity.

Abrams may be right to say that all historical narrative is bound to be organized around some, usually tacit, explanatory model. But it does not necessarily follow that the conscious unravelling of such an apparatus would add very much to our understanding of the Peasants' Revolt or the Dissolution of the Monasteries. There is a case to be made for maintaining a studied indifference to the logic of enquiry that governs our explanatory efforts. Narrative accounts are usually perfectly intelligible without the accompaniment of a decoding device. The business of laying bare the logic of social enquiry is an altogether different activity, conducted for the most part by people agitated by intellectual puzzles of a very different kind from those that worry historians.

It is not too fanciful to suggest, in fact, that social theory is to history as the philosophy of science is to science. Philosophers of science address themselves to the methods and procedures that are said to underlie science as a social activity. For their part, the men in white coats can cheerfully ignore all this, safe in the knowledge that the noisy exchanges between Popper and Kuhn about what is "really" going on in the laboratories have not the slightest practical bearing on their own endeavours. Historians would be well advised to take a leaf out of the scientists' book and go about their ordinary affairs without troubling too much about the anxieties felt for them by their disciplinary neighbours.

Among this week's contributors

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REDMOND O'HANLON has recently completed a study of Joseph Conrad and Charles Darwin.

FRANK PARKIN's *Max Weber* was published earlier this year.

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Conquests born of caution

Igor Vinogradoff

CHRISTOPHER DUFFY

Russia's Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power 1700-1800
269pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£15.
0 7100 0797 3

This is an admirable book. Christopher Duffy has digested a mass of multilingual material (largely Russian and German) to produce a short, readable and well-documented account of the wars which turned Russia into a great European power in the eighteenth century. It may seem strange that no serious attempt has been made to do this before in English, but there is really nothing strange about it. The traditional Russophobia of Europe goes back to the Germany and Poland of the sixteenth century when it first began to dawn on Western Christendom that a new heir to Byzantium was rising in the East.

By an accident of history the first Muscovite monarch to strike the imagination of the West was Ivan IV, the Terrible. German and Polish fly-sheets and woodcuts popularized or rather pilloried him as the nightmare that he was and the genuine representative of Muscovy that he was not. The Counter-Reformation and the Protestantism of the Baltic peoples gave a quasi-religious sanction to the bulwark that Poland and the Teutonic peoples were seen to constitute against this barbarous, schismatic monster. Denmark and Sweden dominated the Baltic; Turkey (backed by France) supported Poland. The unique trading link which England managed to establish with Muscovy through Archangel in the middle of the sixteenth century made for profit, not for friendship. Fletcher, Horsey and Carlsle were typical early English Russophobes who sought revenge in slights or failures experienced in Muscovy by penning or inspiring anti-Muscovite tracts; they were true representatives of average English feelings towards Muscovy rather than the merchants of the Russia Company with their self-interested gifts of splendid silver to the Tsars; generally speaking, the English looked on the Russians as a savage, xenophobic people, whose ambassadors stank and "people beastly be".

Duffy has drawn on original sources and recent studies in all languages with praiseworthy objectivity and clarity. Hence this excellent short book with first-rate maps and plans, slightly disfigured by one minor defect: the map of the Seven Years War battle maps on p.77 shows Austrian formations black and Prussian shaded; the plans themselves do the reverse.

There is much here to interest the professional specialist in military history, as Duffy's impressive qualifications might lead one to expect; he has taught at Sandhurst for over twenty years and is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of War Studies. But leaving on one side the wealth of detailed evidence he has assembled and analysed concerning the growth and organization of the Russian army in this century - armaments and manuals, training and recruitment, staff work, commissariat, war production, officer corps and peasant soldiers - the principal emphasis of the book is rightly concentrated on the wonderful achievements of an army of illiterate peasants, under officers of very varying quality from bad to brilliant, against some of the greatest generals and most formidable armies of the time - Charles XII and Frederick II, the Turks whom they could still beat, the Austrians, the Prussians, and the revolutionary French who were as yet unbeaten anywhere.

There is no space here to retrace what is by any standards a most impressive story. Certain points stand out. Russia was huge but under-populated; the armies she could field were never very large, whatever their official strength on paper; they were outnumbered notably by the technically backward; Russia was the art of war from enemies such as the Swedes, from foreign generals like

Munnich, Bruce and Lacy, most of all through her own perseverance, typified by Peter and his followers; no monarchy of the time commissioned so many translations of newly published foreign works on military science - Borsigolli, Cohorn, Montecuccoli, Vauban and Prince Eugene. Russia's natural resources were underdeveloped; by an extraordinary effort she managed to replace and more than double the whole of the artillery lost at Narva (1700) in a single year. Contrary to what might have been expected, Russia never managed to create an adequate force of heavy cavalry during this period, because of a lack of heavy horses. Her lightly mounted Cossacks were for many years a badly disciplined liability rather than a help. Her principal assets lay in the Seven Years War: infantry - the best in Europe in the view of many foreign experts from the middle of the eighteenth century; and a few inspired commanders like Peter's natural son, Rumiantsev, and Suvorov, the genius of the *Art of Victory*. Feats like Suvorov's epic march in Switzerland in 1799 when he fought his way over four Alpine passes in the face of a superior French army have rarely, if ever, been equalled in the history of warfare.

The only war the Russians did not win was that of propaganda, where, despite all Catherine's efforts, they were never able to match their enemies or convince their allies. Frederick II, Seven Years War, emitted a consistent and successful stream of pamphlets, dressed as history, to denounce Russian "atrocities" and sneer at

Russian incompetence. The fact was that this "scum", whom Frederick's illustrator, Chodowiecki, loved to show as witless mendicants (his models were the relatively small number of prisoners Frederick's Prussians took, only to starve and bully them after capture), smashed Frederick himself at Kunersdorf in 1759 and left him desperate with barely 3,000 men. That they did not take Berlin and end the war victoriously at that time, as Salytkov, their general on the spot, urged, was not their fault; it was the "Miracle of the House of Brandenburg" in Frederick's own words - a consequence of Austria's failure to cooperate and Petersburg's irresolution. As for "atrocities", these were the works of Cossacks and irregular Bashkirs or Kalmauks, who did much harm to Russia's name though they never showed the systematic ruthlessness with which the Prussians treated Spain or Napoleon's soldiers treated Saxony or Russia. Most of them were sent home in 1758 and by Suvorov's time the Cossacks had been turned into a useful scouting force and charged with great effect on the Trebbia and in the Muotathal in 1799. The Russian regulars behaved impeccably in East Prussia during three years of occupation, 1758-1761, when they virtually annexed the province and officers attended lectures by Immanuel Kant, while Prussian *Junkers* fraternized with them. This is not to mention the positive indulgence with which Berlin itself was treated when it was occupied for three days in 1760.

Frederick's propaganda was in tune with the preconceived ideas of most

West Europeans about Russia: that was no doubt why it was so successful both with the great majority of French-influenced "philosophes" and with most old-fashioned European governments and courts; hence the fragility of Russia's friendships and the regularity with which her allies let her down. The fact was no one wanted Russia to make conquests and when she did or looked like doing so, they were aggrieved or frightened, often both. It was in character that Choiseul should be displeased by Russia's victories over Frederick, just as all her allies, led by George I of England and Hanover, turned against her in the Northern War in 1716. It was equally in character that Austria should keep up a consistent record of frustrating or betraying her Russian ally, whether against the Turks or Frederick or France.

Duffy argues for the theory of continuity in Russian history, the belief that Communism has picked up the traditions of the Tsars. That there are superficial resemblances is obvious. In a deeper sense this will not do. Russia's foreign policy in the eighteenth century was apparently dictated by the whims and volleys of successive monarchs; these usually derived from caution. It must be borne in mind that Russia's major wars and conquests were essentially defensive. Poland, Sweden, Turkey were her hereditary foes. The first two had partitioned her in 1655-1613 and put a Polish pretender and a Polish King on Moscow's throne; the Tartars whom the Turks controlled had repeatedly raided Muscovy in the sixteenth century and made the South of Russia

and the littoral of the Black Sea uninhabitable, till they were subdued by Catherine and Russia's southern border was thus secured. The forced on Russia by Frederick and Kaunitz; Paul would have reversed them if he could and Alexander I did his best to reconstitute Poland Restituta under Russia's aegis. As Sweden, rendered impotent by her anarchic constitution, Russia refrained from taking the Grand Duchy of Finland from her, except for a border district, through the eighteenth century, though she could easily have done so in the reign of Elizabeth. Russia could have held on to East Prussia but renounced that valuable province under Peter III. Her victories against the French in Italy were quite unimportant, designed to restore rightful rulers to their thrones and a governing principle to Paul I. There was nothing accidental about the Russia of the eighteenth century. Defensive, cautious, in the last resort legitimist, her acquisitions were forced on her by events; they followed naturally from defensive wars.

Disagreement with some of the author's conclusions does not diminish admiration for his scholarship. Two further criticisms must be made, however. It is not clear why Duffy should insist on calling Grand Dukes Grand Princes. The term "Grand Duke" (Grand Duke) was long ago settled by the usage of the Russian Court. Dr Duffy makes a sentimental plea for Paul I: the case against that pitiful paragon is too strong to be called into question so easily.

D. A. West

RICHARD JENKYNs

Three Classical Poets: Sappho, Catullus and Juvenal
235pp. Duckworth. £24.
0 7156 1636 6

"I have to do with the purity of a good woman", claimed Wilamowitz, whereas the modern scholar finds in Sappho's poetry such horrors as an explicit excrement set in an excrement. Richard Jenkyns, after his excellent book, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, is in his element in placing such excesses in their cultural setting.

Only one complete poem of Sappho survives, and yet she has always been judged a great poet. Jenkyns tests this judgment and finds it true. For example, where the blessed goddess of love has just come in answer to Sappho's prayer on her golden chariot drawn by sparrows - "You smiled on me with your immortal face and asked, 'What is it this time? Why are you calling me today? What is it you're longing for more than anything else? Why are you out of your mind? Who is it I have to win back to your love? Who am I doing you wrong this time, Sappho?' - Aphrodite's divine nature and her amused affection for Sappho, the quick tone of this in the shifting tones of the poem, this is all beautifully fit for us by Jenkyns. He is very good too on Sappho's sensory richness, as when Aphrodite is summoned to the orchard, "where the cold water chatters through the branches of the apple tree" (a merging of three senses as the sound filters down the trees). "And the whole place is shaded by roses," (surprisingly) "and the leaves quiver with light and sleep down from them." Jenkyns puts the moralizing and symbolism and obfuscation in their places and leads us firmly to see that this limpid Greek is a compact of sense and tone and an unimpeachable quality that is distinctively

Sapphic, where the luminous merges into the numinous.

The same attention to detail brings a similar reward from Catullus 64. This is a rocco poem, a play of the vivid, the lovely, the disproportionate and the unpredictable, all for their own sake. Catullus does not tell us simply that Athens doted the first ship, but that "the goddess who guards the citadels on the high points of cities, made with her own hands a chariot to fly in the lightest of winds, bending a keel and joining it to a pine-wood web". Athens is the goddess of war so it is proper that she should have an interest in chariot-making. She is the goddess of the crafts, so naturally she makes it with her own hands. She is the goddess of weaving, so the sides of the ship are appropriately seen as a woven pattern, and it is all ingeniously seen through the eyes of a man seeing his first ship. A wind-propelled chariot, indeed. This is the kind of elucidation offered by Jenkyns (although he does not mention all these points), and he makes it abundantly clear that the poem depends upon the virtuosic complexity of such effects. This is what makes it impossible to translate without frigidity, and a miracle to read in Latin.

Catullus set himself to write a long poem in which the age of heroes would be viewed with a romantic nostalgia against contemporary Roman moral degeneration and civil war. But the Roman conclusion is cliché-ridden for the heroic age is flawed by the lamentations of Ariadne on Naxos and the gruesome and repulsive allusions to Achilles. These darker tones accord with Catullus' intention to write a poem that would be varied, arresting and unpredictable, but they do temporarily blur the basic argument. Jenkyns argues well that these elements do not seriously weaken the poem. It does not stand or fall by the validity of its sociological and theological analyses. These are not Catullus' strengths. We should rather look upon it as a series of "shining pictures", to adopt E. J. Scovell's

words on the baby's skull, "beautiful, with no meaning, but that it causes those to love, who hold it in their hands".

Juvenal's Satires also are conspicuous for their vivid particulars. "The text prickles with detail," as Jenkyns puts it. The important thing is to get it right. To say that the very tombs have their fates assigned to them misses the rhetoric; death is the lot even of tombs. To talk of the taste of the haggis in the pudding cookshop" is not only treason against the great chief of the *boiling haggis* is worlds away from the greasy smell of womb stewing in the overheated cookshop. When we hear of the high-born lady who pays to undo the actor's pin, some of us need to be told a little about the infibulation of castrati. When Tiberius in retreat in Capri sits on the narrow rock with a herd of Babylonians, we do not wish to hear about a gaggle of gannets. Capri is Goat Island. The astrologers are goats perched on the rocks. When the modern father urges his son to take up a trade, it does not

matter whether it is perfumery or tanning, this is a clear allusion to Vespaian's famous joke. Titus had begged his father to cancel the state tax on urine which Roman laundries used for bleaching. "Money doesn't smell", replied Vespaian, and the same stench from the same liquid rose from tanneries. When the traditional Roman farmer sat down at table with his pregnant wife, and the young children, three of his own, one a house-born slave, are playing around him, the points are the lost fertility of the Roman family, the favourable balance between free and slave, and their cosy cohabitation. This is all lost if *turba* ("household") is translated as "the crowd in the cottage", just as it ruins the point if an old woman drops Greek endearments "in public". It is worse than that. She drops them in *turba*, at home, *devant les domestiques*.

Juvenal's satire is conspicuous for its vivid details arranged to present the maximum absurdity. This is the weakest part of this book because Jenkyns has lost his focus on the details and is trying to find a whole set of

undervalued poetic qualities in Juvenal, "human sympathy", "a unique poetic voice", "a depth and verity in his pictures", "ambivalence of tone and complex emotional effect". This is the wrong tack. These qualities are not there. What human sympathy is expressed is there to be a foil to the denigration of some human perversity or depravity. The way forward in understanding this text is not to look for hitherto undisclosed poetic merits, but to make sense of its fiendish particularity.

In his preface Jenkyns quotes Blake. "To Generalise is to be an idiot. To Particularise is the Alone Distinction of Merit." Sappho, Catullus 64 and Juvenal make an odd trio but by some chance Blake's generalization works quite well with all three. The particularity which Jenkyns has practised in his studies of art along with a firmness of judgment and absence of the doctrinaire, has enabled him to produce the best introduction to Sappho for those with little or no Greek and the best available treatment of Catullus 64.

Master of disguise

Niall Rudd

D. R. SHACKLETON BAILEY

Profile of Horace
142pp. Duckworth. £18.
0 7156 1591 2

Many years ago a colleague set this question in an exam: "Does Horace's poetry represent two contradictory attitudes to life?" One answer said, "After careful thought I have come to the conclusion that Horace's poetry does not represent two contradictory attitudes to life." The word "not" however, had been crossed out. I wondered how this finely balanced decision had been reached, but except for that one Delphic sentence the page

was completely blank. The question remains; for Horace does come before us in several roles. One approach is to try to relate the roles, making due allowance for their variety and inconsistency. Another is to treat certain roles as reflecting the real Horace and to explain the rest away. Horace the poet laureate, for example, is often seen as the result of official pressure. A third approach is to say that "visible behind his disguises is the ever-controlling and supremely controlled artist. Behind the artist was a personality barely now to be glimpsed, eternally elusive." That is how D. R. Shackleton Bailey sees the matter, and he is not alone. Such a view allows the critic to study the separate roles - often an illuminating exercise. But it must surely make it impossible to draw a profile.

A brief section on the *Epodes* argues that the abusive pieces have no significant relation to reality; they were written and preserved simply as Latin specimens of the Greek iambic tradition. That was Fraenkel's opinion, twenty-five years ago. It seemed unconvincing then (see *Hermathena* 91, 1958, 44-8) and nothing has happened since to confirm it. Shackleton Bailey's fourteen pages on the *Odes* are devoted to the same, rather narrow, issue. But here the author is more discriminating. The wolf in the woods is "credible enough"; the rotten bough actually fell; but the lightning of 1.34, like the vision of 2.19, has a purely poetic status. Ligitinus in 4.1 and 4.10 may be imaginary, but that is not established by the homosexual character of the two odes. Agreed - except that in the case of 1.34 the thunder might, as L. P. Wilkinson says, have been inferred from a seismic tremor and the lightning added as the poem took shape. Origins are of minimal importance. Yet it is still sensible to suppose that several of the poems were prompted by some specific event or experience. The *Saraceni* ode is a case in point. (The mountain, incidentally, could not have been seen from the Sabine farm; on p. 37, n. 8, D. A. West has been misunderstood.)

In these pages there are a few points of interpretation which, though small in themselves, help to enhance our understanding. The lofty morality of the *integer vitae* (1.22) turns out amusingly to be just the devotion of the lover-poet. In 4.5.17 *perambulat* implies grazing. This links the constructive behaviour of the ox to the kindness of Ceres and so justifies the repetition of *perambulat*. But in general Shackleton Bailey has little to say about the *Odes* and *Epodes*.

The chapters on the *Satires* and *Epistles* are more substantial, offering connected comments on selected poems and passages. The style is slim and elegant, and even "simplistic Horatianism" will enjoy its sly wit. (Shackleton Bailey is a confessed *aeolophilus*.) Just occasionally, the judgments seem a little too sharp. Horace is called "an inveterate snob"; well yes, he was something of a snob,

but he admitted his own vanity and laughed at it. Again, *Epist.* 1.14 is badly as vacuous as we are asked to believe. (Horace in Rome longs for the country; his balliff in the country longs for Rome. The wise man can adjust happily to any place. By that standard both H and B are foolish, but H is at least consistent; B isn't for when Rome he used to sigh for the country. Their tastes differ. But age is also relevant. The pleasures of the town are unsuitable to a man over forty. H has realized this; B hasn't. He envies the slave-boys in Rome, though some would gladly change places with him.) Yet, as one would expect, there are much to agree with and many deft formulations. *Sat.* 1.6 is called "a personal apostrophe to *disarm ill will*"; a discussion of *Sat.* 2.3 is neatly rounded off with *qui s'excuse s'excuse*; there are plausible and amusing hypotheses about what Maecenas said at the famous interview and about his reactions to *Epist.* 1.7.

The meat consists of philological detail changes in punctuation, the re-attribution of lines, the elucidation of words and phrases. Genuine problems, but specialized. Here is a small point where the literary implications are more apparent. In *Sat.* 2.3 a speaker scolds Horace for laziness. In spite of his fine promises he has written nothing: "do you think you can placate people's dislike *virtute refuta*?" Shackleton Bailey translates by "ceasing to do good work" and rejects my rendering "by deserting the cause of virtue". But just a minute: the satirist is the defender of virtue; if he ceases to write he will be deserting his cause. So Shackleton Bailey and I are not so far apart - except that he has lost some of the speaker's moralizing tone. Perhaps Shackleton Bailey might reconsider "enterprising poverty" for *paupertas audax* (*Epist.* 2.2.51). Horace is referring to the "daring" *Epodes*, as the parallel with Lucilius soldier, shows. "Clerkship" for *scriba* and "the bore" for the figure in *Sat.* 1.9 are traditional but misleading; and "interfere with" for *permalere* and "married ladies" for *coniuncti* are, as the author well knows, two *belles infidèles*.

Of the thirty odd conjectures in Appendix I some look attractive at first sight (eg. *Peerikamp's relectioque* in *Odes* 3.9.20), others less so (*meo uti avarius se probat* in *Sat.* 1.1.108 would more naturally mean "I am possible than no miser is at ease with himself"). But all will require careful study; for Shackleton Bailey is an acute responder and few can rival his command of Latin. Reading his entertaining essay on Bentley, one realizes afresh not only that genius is unique and unpredictable and very rare but also that even the textual critic of high talent is now an endangered species. This is a serious situation, because we all depend on his work. One can only hope that in his years in America Shackleton Bailey has trained some good students. It would be nice if the next edition of Horace came from Harvard.

The laziest of them all

Isabel de Madariaga

ANDRÉ MONNIER

Un Publiciste Frondeur sous Catherine II: Nicolas Novikov
388pp. Paris: Institut D'Etudes Slaves.
2 7204 0175 7

Considering the importance of Novikov's role in the intellectual history of Russia it is astonishing that so little attention has been devoted to him by Western scholars. André Monnier's study is thus very welcome, even though he limits himself severely to the first stage in Novikov's life as a publisher, namely the years 1769-74.

It is by now well-established that the sudden proliferation of satirical journals in these years, spearheaded by the appearance of *All Sins of Things*, edited by Catherine II's secretary G. Kozitsky, was largely sustained by raids on German and French translations from the British journals, principally *The Spectator*. Novikov's first satirical weekly formed an exception: in that most of the material was either written by himself or by mainly identifiable collaborators. But more than any of the other weeklies (*Miscellany*, *This and That*, *Neither This nor That*) the very title he chose echoes the literary form launched by *The Spectator* - the editor who stands aside and watches, or in the case of Novikov, *The Drone*, "leader than the laziest of Spaniards", whose only hope of being useful to society lies in publishing the work of others. (May one perhaps see here an allusion to the fact that Novikov was expelled from Moscow University for laziness?)

Almost at once *The Drone* stood out among the other reviews by the edge it gave to its satire. Novikov's targets included corrupt and idle officials, judges who took bribes, nobles who oppressed or tortured their peasants, gossamer, ignorant men and attention to a hitherto unstressed aspect of his satire: its virulent misogyny, illustrated by the disproportion between the cruel diatribes against old and young coquettes and the attacks on *petit-maitres* (four to one), and by the publication in four-and-a-half issues of his third journal, *The Painter*, of a Russian translation, in verse, of Boileau's dreary satire on women. Unfortunately so little is known

about Novikov the man that there is no means of detecting what personal experience developed in him this unpleasantly carping antifeminism.

Where Monnier's account diverges substantially from Soviet criticism is in his rejection of the thesis that Novikov was an "enlightener". He emerges from these pages as a proto-slavophile, a Solzhenitsyn, not a Sakharov. The main burden of his criticism is moral, not political. He does not want to change the institutional structure; he does not, for instance, attack the system of serfdom as such, only cruel and oppressive owners. Monnier draws attention here to the developing nationalism of Novikov, to the way which his satire points not to a better future but to a better past. Where was this past? On the only occasion where Novikov is actually specific, it is pre-Petrine. There is even in *The Painter* a passage extolling the maxims of the medieval book of household precepts, the *Domostroy*: "Let the woman fear her husband." Otherwise Novikov seems to regard with approval the 1730s and 1740s, when German intellectual influence predominated in Russia. There is a whole abstruse between this Novikov and the anticlerical, libertine, Voltairian, materialist, "enlighteners" so beloved of Soviet critics, and Monnier's analysis, based on a purely literary scrutiny of what Novikov wrote or published, is on the whole convincing.

Monnier also adopts a non-Soviet position regarding the controversy between Catherine II and Novikov. In common with the English expert on Novikov, W. J. Garret Jones, he argues that Novikov and the other editors took for granted that Kozitsky was the actual editor of *All Sins of Things*. Indeed Catherine's connection with the journal was not known until P. Bekarevsky discovered it in the 1860s. It was only after that date that the theory of the polemic between Novikov and Catherine (Chernyshevsky struggling against Alexander II's) took wing.

The polemic centred around the nature of satire. Catherine/Kozitsky argued in favour of generalized satire, against vices, Novikov preferred more specific human targets. Catherine is thus portrayed in Soviet criticism as wishing to keep Russian literary life in leading strings. Much of this interpretation collapsed when it was discovered that the theory of satire approved by Catherine was based on that of *The Teller* and *The Spectator*. Even so, in the words of the leading

Soviet specialist in this field, Yu. D. Levin, the political moderation of Addison and Steele, their "gentlemanly humour", their rejection of satire against the person, was the considered result of their rejection against the violent party strife of the time. In Levin's view, lampoons and libels were in England the instrument of a "right-wing feudal aristocracy", whereas in Russia the rejection of satire against the person acquired the character of a defence of absolute government against criticism from the left.

Monnier's defence of the view that Novikov was aiming his shafts primarily at Kozitsky is on the whole convincing. The rude and even coarse remarks directed at elderly ladies could not write Russian were aimed at the editorial persons of *All Sins of Things*, "granny". It was against the accepted canon of behaviour of the time, however, to indulge in personal abuse of the sovereign (except when drunk). Novikov was certainly capable of personal abuse, of satire against the person, as in his treatment of the playwright Lukin, or the author Chulikov (both, incidentally, noble). But one may search in vain for attacks on identifiable magnates. Monnier suggests that Novikov made no enemies at court, but the really important magnates simply did not feel they were under attack and could afford to agree (as did Catherine) with satires on corrupt officials or cruel landowners, since in their own estimation they were neither.

It is when he moves from literary analysis to the historical and social background that Monnier's book gives rise to serious reservations. He falls himself into the trap he accuses the modern Soviet critics of falling into: of making assumptions - based on insufficient evidence and then building up a whole theory on them. This is particularly striking in his treatment of the censorship, which he repeatedly blames for delays in publication, or (which Garret Jones has shown to be unsubstantiated). He is evidently quite unaware that the official presses on which the journals were printed were off Sumarokov for rudeness to a named person in a satire printed on the Academy Press. Her reason was that she might be assumed to have agreed with him.

Monnier's picture of the Russian political and social background is also somewhat askew. The works he has consulted for background are astonishingly out of date, the most recent being a French popular biography of 1966. As a result he is frequently wrong on important and unimportant facts, and too ill-informed to assess the lack of foundation for some of his theories. To give but one example, he suggests that Novikov, who had by then gravitated towards Nikita Panin (the leading figure in the circle of the Grand Duke Paul when the latter's majority was imminent), was attacking Catherine at Panin's instigation in 1772 because her "brutal" behaviour in Poland was alienating Frederick II, "a ruler whose alliance Russia was seeking". As though Frederick and Catherine were not, at that time, already more than allies, indeed accomplices in crime!

The reason for Monnier's uncertain touch in political and social matters seems to be that he does not read English. He is therefore unaware that in the past twenty years more scholarly work on Catherine than has been published in the US, Canada, and Great Britain (under the aegis of A. G. Cross) than in the Soviet Union. In particular he is totally unacquainted with the work of Garret Jones, and with the only modern study of the censorship in eighteenth-century Russia, by K. Parnell of Ontario. Yet in spite of many errors of judgment, Monnier makes many perceptive suggestions. That Novikov should move towards Panin for instance is merely an anticipation of his subsequent allegiance to the Grand Duke Paul. Indeed the proto-slavophile who emerges from Monnier's pages seems far more likely to evolve into the German-oriented Rosicrucian mystic of the late 1780s than does the ardent "enlightener" portrayed in modern Soviet scholarship. But could one not ask just one question of all these experts: Novikov was barely twenty-six years old when he launched *The Drone*. May he not simply have enjoyed cocking a snook at the establishment?

A Catalogue of the Compositions of S. Rachmaninoff by Robert Thrall and Geoffrey Norris (218pp. Scolar Press. £30. 0 85967 617 X) lists the title and style of each work, with dates, dedications, instrumentation and key; text and libretto; publication history; manuscript sources; the composer's own recordings; notable performances; and arrangements by himself or made with his sanction.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

Pointed particulars

D. A. West

RICHARD JENKYNs

Three Classical Poets: Sappho, Catullus and Juvenal
235pp. Duckworth. £24.
0 7156 1636 6

"I have to do with the purity of a good woman", claimed Wilamowitz, whereas the modern scholar finds in Sappho's poetry such horrors as an explicit excrement set in an excrement. Richard Jenkyns, after his excellent book, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, is in his element in placing such excesses in their cultural setting.

Only one complete poem of Sappho survives, and yet she has always been judged a great poet. Jenkyns tests this judgment and finds it true. For example, where the blessed goddess of love has just come in answer to Sappho's prayer on her golden chariot drawn by sparrows - "You smiled on me with your immortal face and asked, 'What is it this time? Why are you calling me today? What is it you're longing for more than anything else? Why are you out of your mind? Who is it I have to win back to your love? Who am I doing you wrong this time, Sappho?' - Aphrodite's divine nature and her amused affection for Sappho, the quick tone of this in the shifting tones of the poem, this is all beautifully fit for us by Jenkyns. He is very good too on Sappho's sensory richness, as when Aphrodite is summoned to the orchard, "where the cold water chatters through the branches of the apple tree" (a merging of three senses as the sound filters down the trees). "And the whole place is shaded by roses," (surprisingly) "and the leaves quiver with light and sleep down from them." Jenkyns puts the moralizing and symbolism and obfuscation in their places and leads us firmly to see that this limpid Greek is a compact of sense and tone and an unimpeachable quality that is distinctively

Sapphic, where the luminous merges into the numinous.

The same attention to detail brings a similar reward from Catullus 64. This is a rocco poem, a play of the vivid, the lovely, the disproportionate and the unpredictable, all for their own sake. Catullus does not tell us simply that Athens doted the first ship, but that "the goddess who guards the citadels on the high points of cities, made with her own hands a chariot to fly in the lightest of winds, bending a keel and joining it to a pine-wood web". Athens is the goddess of war so it is proper that she should have an interest in chariot-making. She is the goddess of the crafts, so naturally she makes it with her own hands. She is the goddess of weaving, so the sides of the ship are appropriately seen as a woven pattern, and it is all ingeniously seen through the eyes of a man seeing his first ship. A wind-propelled chariot, indeed. This is the kind of elucidation offered by Jenkyns (although he does not mention all these points), and he makes it abundantly clear that the poem depends upon the virtuosic complexity of such effects. This is what makes it impossible to translate without frigidity, and a miracle to read in Latin.

Catullus set himself to write a long poem in which the age of heroes would be viewed with a romantic nostalgia against contemporary Roman moral degeneration and civil war. But the Roman conclusion is cliché-ridden for the heroic age is flawed by the lamentations of Ariadne on Naxos and the gruesome and repulsive allusions to Achilles. These darker tones accord with Catullus' intention to write a poem that would be varied, arresting and unpredictable, but they do temporarily blur the basic argument. Jenkyns argues well that these elements do not seriously weaken the poem. It does not stand or fall by the validity of its sociological and theological analyses. These are not Catullus' strengths. We should rather look upon it as a series of "shining pictures", to adopt E. J. Scovell's

The triumph of compassion

Stephanie West

C. W. MACLEOD (Editor)

Homos: Iliad, Book 24
142pp. Cambridge University Press.
£15 (paperback, £5.95).
0 521 24353 X

C. W. Macleod's eagerly awaited commentary on *Iliad* xxiv appeared within weeks of his tragic death. Though his many illuminating articles on both Greek and Latin authors will ensure that he will not be remembered simply as a Homeric specialist, this was his only book, and my sense of a *triste ministerium* in reviewing it (which otherwise would have been a joy) is heightened by its constant suggestions that the interpretation of classical literature might have gained had he lived longer.

While books about Homer proliferate, systematic exegesis is less popular, and for serious study of the *Iliad* we depend on Leaf's great commentary, exemplary in its conscientious discussion of every sort of difficulty, but now, eighty years on, it was published, badly in need of amendment. In part its shortcomings are due to its author would have been old when he launched *The Drone*. May he not simply have enjoyed cocking a snook at the establishment?

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Monnier's picture of the Russian political and social background is also somewhat askew. The works he has consulted for background are astonishingly out of date, the most recent being a French popular biography of 1966. As a result he is frequently wrong on important and unimportant facts, and too ill-informed to assess the lack of foundation for some of his theories. To give but one example, he suggests that Novikov, who had by then gravitated towards Nikita Panin (the leading figure in the circle of the Grand Duke Paul when the latter's majority was imminent), was attacking Catherine at Panin's instigation in 1772 because her "brutal" behaviour in Poland was alienating Frederick II, "a ruler whose alliance Russia was seeking". As though Frederick and Catherine were not, at that time, already more than allies, indeed accomplices in crime!

guidance. Homeric scholarship has long tended to be chary of literary criticism (though Jasper Griffin's *Homer on Life and Death*, 1980, is an outstanding exception to this generalization), but the aim of the series in which this commentary appears, to "say more about works as literature and concentrate less exclusively on textual and syntactical matters", encourages us to expect a sensitive literary analysis. The expectation is not disappointed.

The last book of the *Iliad* holds a particular appeal for modern readers, as the story turns from revenge to reconciliation, from demented grief to the consoling rituals of mourning. Much of the epic is coloured by attitudes which we do not share, and may indeed view with some suspicion; we distrust our imaginative response to the wild exhilaration of heroic warfare and the single-minded pursuit of glory central to the heroic code. Here, as the focus shifts to Priam in his bereavement, we feel no such reservations. Death lessons life, and we see Achilles at his noblest in his dealings with the old king. In this triumph of compassion, bringing with it the recognition of a national humanity transcending differences, we have the expression of themes which Macleod presents as more firmly rooted in the structure of the poem than has generally been recognized.

Though it would be quite misleading to imply an exclusive preoccupation with literary criticism, one of Macleod's principal objects in writing a commentary was "to bring out how variously Homer's art is manifested, and how firmly it is sustained", and it is here that the originality and subtlety of his approach are most obvious. Everywhere we find the fruits of sensitive observation and analysis, conveyed with elegance and precision.

The introductory pages on language and style provide an admirably lucid and succinct account which newcomers will not find daunting, though there is plenty to interest those who feel reasonably familiar with the subject. This extraordinary success in catering for users at very different levels (including those who know no Greek) is characteristic of the whole work, and it is likely to exercise an influence far greater than

Bargaining with the Devil

Richard Grenier

MICHAEL R. MARRUS and
ROBERT O. PAXTON
Vichy France and the Jews
432pp. Harper and Row. £9.50.
0463 09005 2

In May, 1926, a mild-mannered Yiddish poet named Scholem Schwartzbard shot and killed the Ukrainian leader Symyon Petliura in Paris in revenge for the tens of thousands of Jews murdered by Ukrainians in pogroms during the Russian Civil War. After a sensational trial, Schwartzbard, in consideration of the sufferings of his people, was acquitted by a compassionate French jury. Twelve years later, in 1938, a seventeen-year-old German Jew named Herschel Grynszpan shot to death the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath, also in Paris. But Grynszpan enjoyed little of the sympathetic indulgence that had so favoured Schwartzbard. Not only did French police instantly seize him, they also seized his aunt and uncle, who were sentenced to six months in prison for harbouring an illegal alien. In Hitler's Germany, the vom Rath assassination triggered the anti-semitic orgy now known as the *Kristallnacht*, and in France as well angry anti-semites rushed forward, calling for harsh measures against Jews, particularly Jewish aliens. Grynszpan's trial was overtaken, first by war, then by the French defeat, and he was finally turned over to the tender mercies of the Nazis. But what had happened to French public opinion in twelve short years? This is a question of compelling interest to all of us, since Jews, unwillingly (I can hardly think they sought the role), have for some time served as barometers of a society's social and psychic health. Let us say, when mobs surge through the streets screaming "Death to the Jews!", that the body politic is not well.

Vichy France and the Jews by Michael Marrus of the University of Toronto and Robert Paxton of Columbia is a quite brilliant work, giving in fascinating detail the origins and evolution of Vichy's Jewish policies and the support – and sometimes aversion – these policies called forth in the French population. "Anti-semitism burgeoned in France during the decade before Vichy," they write. "The government of Pétain did not invent the anti-Jewish program it so earnestly and eagerly put forward in 1940. Every element of this program was present in the years preceding the fall of the Third Republic."

To a large degree French anti-semitism of the late 1930s was a backlash from the outstandingly generous position France had taken during the refugee crisis of the same decade. France took in more refugees than any other country in the world – more than double the number taken in by the United States – and was the only country to support them from public funds. Of the estimated 300,000 Jews in France when war broke out, at least half were foreign, and of the half that were French citizens many had been naturalized only shortly before. So the precipitous upsurge in French anti-semitism was part of, and confused with, a generalized xenophobia, quite unlike the Nazis' biological racism. It must also be remembered, in terms of popular thinking, that it was still a pre-Keynesian world. Every refugee was seen as stealing a job from a French worker, as well as diluting French culture and, if a Jew, as possessing a special animus against the Nazis, likely to cause trouble with Germany. The vom Rath assassination brought renewed Franco-German tension just six weeks after Munich.

Marrus and Paxton are particularly lucid on the history of anti-semitism, a subject on which Marrus has written well before. Anti-semitism has been associated with remarkably different intellectual currents, from clericalism to socialism to nationalism. "Anti-Jewish images permeated like a gaseous current beneath the cultural surface," they write, "periodically changing in composition, sometimes kept down by external pressures, then sometimes bursting forth, after having mingled explosively with some economic or social issue." The issues in the 1930s were fairly obvious: the world economic depression and the menace of Nazi Germany.

The major historic font of anti-semitism was, alas, Christianity, according to whose doctrine the Jews were the object of that most unspeakable of charges: deicide. As Christian fervour receded in the nineteenth century, inventive theorists underlooked to do what intellectuals, unfortunately, have always done best, to provide, as the authors say, "sophisticated and clever reasons for people to believe what they already believed". In the anti-semitism against Jews was justified. In France, the Left was snooty in the van, with such distinguished early socialists as Proudhon and Fourier attacking Jews as the very symbols of capitalism, bourgeois society, their antipathy running parallel to the corrosive anti-semitism of a not unknown German Jewish socialist named Karl Marx. Later, anti-semitism came to be called sometimes with indulgence – "the socialism of fools". The link between socialism and anti-semitism survived even into Hitler's time, with the left wing of the National Socialist Party (for it originally did have a left wing) making much of Jews as capitalist bloodsuckers. And, of course, it has found a new bastion in our own day, in a period not covered by the present work. With anti-semitism throughout the capitalist and "mixed-economy" West dropping to historically unprecedented levels, it has maintained itself, in Europe, only in the totalitarian-Marxist societies of the Soviet sphere.

In the nineteenth century, be it said, socialists at no time had a monopoly on anti-semitism. There was always substantial popular hostility among the peasant and artisan classes, and in a more refined form among the conservative elite. And racism, the illegitimate offspring of Darwinism, was soon to prove a godsend to those seeking a rationalization for anti-Jewish hatreds on the nationalist Right. Towards the end of the century Paris, according to a recent study, became "the spiritual capital of the European Right", and these new anti-democratic agitators held Jews disbarred for everything they did about the French Republic: materialism, greed, corruption, scandal. Despite their most determined efforts, however, the support of the bulk of the French popular press, the pro-Dreyfus forces, won in that titanic struggle and French anti-semitism and racism went into a sharp decline. Marrus and Paxton estimate that in 1930, in fact, "polite" anti-semitism of the social exclusionary sort was stronger in Britain and the United States than it was in France. In the 1930s great American universities still infamously excluded Jews from their faculties, for example, a practice that had become unthinkable in France, as indeed in Weimar Germany. Then came the Depression. Hitler, and within a decade, the Holocaust.

Marrus and Paxton's central thesis is that the raw statistics of the Holocaust, nation by nation, have misled historians into believing that Vichy France conducted a stout defence of "its" Jews. After all, the reasoning goes, some 90 per cent of the Jewish population were annihilated in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Baltic states, and the Bohemian Protectorate. The figure for White Russia and the Ukraine is 90-95 per cent; for the Netherlands, 75 per cent; France is down at the bottom of the list with 25 per cent, bettered principally only by Germany's privileged ally, Italy, with 20 per cent, and by Finland and Denmark, whose tiny, highly integrated Jewish populations got off scot-free. Marrus and Paxton present an overwhelming case that these figures were the result of the fortunes of war. Wherever the Germans were present in strength and able to apply their power, the Jews were destroyed. Italy openly sabotaged its own anti-semitic edicts until the fall of Mussolini and the occupation of the northern part of the country by Germany. Hungary, also, had a better record than Vichy until the last year of the war, when the Germans took administration into their own hands. The Nazis had a

pathological dread of Jewish populations in the immediate rear of their armies, which helps to explain their ravages both in the east and in Holland – the staging area for their attack on Britain. Holland, a "Germanic" nation, also had the misfortune of being slated for incorporation into the Third Reich, requiring, of course, that it be *Judenrein* (Jew-free). The authors are unequivocally right when they say that, if the tide of battle had gone differently, and the Germans had the available man-power, they would have exterminated the Jews of France as they did the Jews of Poland, and no Pétain or Laval would have stopped them.

The study then focuses on a somewhat different issue: given the narrow range of options, and the prospect that all might be futile in any case, did Vichy at least do its best to shelter France's Jewish population from the horrors of the Final Solution? The widely believed answer to this question is a resounding no. On its own initiative, and with no prompting whatever from Berlin, Vichy introduced in the first months after the defeat a whole array of anti-semitic measures that completely destroyed the position of Jews in French society: race decrees (more stringent than those applied by the Germans in Occupied France), dismissal of Jews from government service, exclusion of Jews from the professions and higher education. Aggravated on its own initiative, Vichy interned in camps thousands of foreign (but not French) Jews. When the Final Solution began, Vichy volunteered to round up and turn over to the Germans foreign (but again not French) Jews from the Unoccupied Zone. For Marrus and Paxton, the most needless and chilling act of all seems to have been the stamping on every Jewish identity and ration-card of the single word: "Jew".

Still, despite the stunning rise of anti-semitism in France in the decade before the war, it is notable that the authors do not attribute Vichy's racist measures to active malice against Jews on the part of the government's leader, Pierre Laval, but rather to a "colossal miscalculation" on his part. Laval, they write, "assumed that the German authorities would be grateful to the French for pursuing a parallel anti-Jewish policy, and would respond by yielding greater authority to France over this and other spheres of national activity". This bargaining advantage, the authors themselves say, "seemed likely". They grant that Laval refused to compel Jews of the Unoccupied Zone to wear the yellow star at a time when the Germans had made it obligatory in the north. They grant that, in a volte-face no doubt influenced by the change in the course of the war, Laval rebelled against the Germans in August, 1943, and refused to strip recently nationalized French Jews of their citizenship – which would have left them exposed to Nazi

deprivations. The authors seem to accept that the cornerstone of the Laval policy was to abandon foreign and stateless Jews to the Nazis in the hope of protecting French Jews, particularly the native born, and that in this he had some success. They acknowledge, finally, that the SS had expected to deport all 300,000 Jews of France towards their Final Solution by the end of 1943, but that it was only able to reach some 20 per cent of this figure and felt Laval must be "dragging his feet". But foot-dragging is not enough for Marrus and Paxton. Vichy France, although a crushed, defeated nation, still had "significant attributes of sovereignty", they say. Laval should have stood up to the Nazis. He should have tried to save, not only French Jews, but foreign Jews; not only some Jews, but all. He should have called the Nazis "bluff" – the authors' word.

Now no one claims that Vichy was a glorious page in French history. France, despite the growth of insidious tendencies during the 1930s, had entered the war as the custodian of many noble traditions – the Rights of Man, tolerance, hospitality – and succour to victims of oppression – but in the misery and demoralization of defeat, these had gone. Vichy policies were reactionary and, in many ways, contemptible. They were hostile to Protestants, Freemasons, Communists, Jews, and violently hostile to foreign minorities. Laval heartlessly turned over to the Germans not only foreign Jews, but veterans of the Spanish Republican army and even German refugees who had fought for France in the war against Hitler (here was a violation of a sacred trust). Measures against Communists were easiest to understand, as during Vichy's first year Nazi-Soviet friendship was still in bloom and the French Communist leader Maurice Thorez, safe in Moscow, was openly exulting in the German victory.

But Laval's efforts on behalf of the bulk of the French population were considerable. For most French citizens the "real" deportation was the conscription of young Frenchmen as industrial workers in Germany, the levies for which Laval fought doggedly to keep to a minimum. Some time after he was executed by firing squad, records came to light in the archives of the Third Reich indicating that the Germans had considered Laval duplicitous and untrustworthy (from their point of view), always threatening that every attempt to levy Frenchmen into the Resistance. Laval's efforts on behalf of French Jews were also appreciable. On a continent fanatically extruding Jews from native populations almost everywhere, Laval continued to consider French Jews as Frenchmen. He had been twice prime minister of the Third Republic, haven of liberty, equality, fraternity. All that was gone and he was now totally callous to foreigners, but he was still prime minister of France, bargaining with the Devil, trying to save his own. He

certainly may have "miscalculated" – an error easier to see now than then. But the authors seem determined to deny Laval every last speck of merit. Those were terrible times. I am less determined than they.

Their comparison of Vichy France with Hungary, of which they make so much, is plainly tendentious. As they say themselves, the Germans never considered France anything but a "defeated enemy", while Hungary, like Italy, was an honoured ally, its army fighting alongside German armies. Equally important, perhaps, at least half of the Jews of French territory were foreign or stateless, the result of France's humanitarian binges of the preceding decade. The Jews of Hungary, even those of Greater Hungary, were almost entirely native, which produced a quite different situation. I also do not quite understand the authors' attitude towards Laval's delaying tactics. "Laval may have thought that in postponing things he had won a real concession," they write at one point in seeming derision. But wasn't buying time, "postponing things", the whole game? Isn't that the crux of the authors' concluding argument? If the war went on long enough, the reaper would surely reap – meanwhile, mauling, obstruct, play for time?

But if the authors do not quite carry me with them on Laval, they have still written an utterly absorbing book, something of a spiritual history of a great democratic nation sunk in the squalor of moral collapse. Even in that dark time, however, there were glimmers of light. As part of their imposing research, Marrus and Paxton studied for the first time the confidential reports to the central government of France's prefects, and we learn of the revulsion felt by large sections of the French population at the hideous scenes at railway stations when convoys of Jews were deported. Some prefects even deplored this "sentimental" reaction. Here French people had been filled with robust anti-semitism, loudly demanding measures against Jews, and all they needed to see was a few dozen sobbing children at a railway station and they started to protest. Really, one prefect wrote with disgust, "The Frenchman remains ungovernable". The imposition of the yellow star in the Occupied Zone also had a strong negative effect. The French were much given to the wearing of military decorations with civilian clothes, particularly at that period, and solid, self-respecting Frenchmen walking down the street wearing both their decorations for valour and the yellow star were so many refutations of anti-semitic propaganda. The French were also quite horrified at the sight of the parents were Jews, but surely these little children weren't Jews, they were just small human beings. The response shows something about the limits of certain abstract ideas. As long as anti-semitism remained on the level of a Jewish caricature in the newspapers, many Frenchmen found it reasonable enough. But looked at in the flesh it didn't seem right at all.

Of all the evils the Nazis perpetrated, it is probably true that the one that discredited them most was their anti-semitism. Exhilarating as it may have appeared to many Europeans at the time, and to countless others before them, anti-semitism seems utterly repugnant to us today, and bonded to the Nazis forever in history. Fixation on the Nazi period and the Holocaust, however, has contributed heavily to defining fascism as the ultimate political evil and to a diminished receptivity to signals of tyranny in other quarters – at present far more threatening to our society. For those interested in anti-semitism as an indication of evil at loose in the body politic, it is worth noting that the only contemporary nation to carry the word "Jew" on identity cards (ostensibly for the purpose of giving the individual a "nationality") is the Soviet Union, and that General Jaruzelski of Poland is the only national leader in a quarter of a century to have openly and officially sounded the ancient cry: "It's the fault of the Jews." Not even "Zionists".

Swallowed by the sea

Redmond O'Hanlon

JOHN HARRIS
Without trace: The last voyages of eight ships
244pp. Eyre Methuen. £7.50.
0413 46170 X

In 1926 the Chuky, a 7,000-ton, five-year-old freighter, built in Glasgow, was making an unremarkable passage towards Japan with a cargo of copper concentrate. After a morning chat with her captain on the bridge, the chief engineer walked aft along the catwalk. A shotgun, of smallish bore, it seemed, was then discharged behind his head. Turning round, he was just in time to see the bow section of the ship tip open itself away from the stern, roll over, and sink so quickly that even the men on the open bridge were carried down. His own truncated section remained afloat only long enough to lower a boat and to get clear with the ship's dog.

Joseph Conrad had imagined it all before. Jim, remembering himself deep in the Patna, tells Marlow, "Dash it all I tell you it bulged. I was holding up my lamp along the angle-iron in the lower deck when a flake of rust as big as the palm of my hand fell off the plate, all of itself. . . . The thing stirred and jumped off like something alive while I was looking at it." And Jim "could depict to himself without hindrance the sudden swing upwards of the dark sky-line, the sudden tilt up of the vast plain of the sea, the swift rise, the brutal flip, the grasp of the abyss, the struggle without hope, the starlight closing over his head for ever like the vault of a tomb. . . ."

And so it must have seemed, say, at various moments of sharp but brief terror, from January 1961 to January 1971, to the crews of the seventy merchantmen who were officially posted missing at Lloyds; and to the passengers and crew of the SS *Wamash*, lost without trace in 1909, and USS *Cyclops* (1918), whose disappearances are here considered in detail. But the eye-witness account from the Chuky provides the probable explanation of their ends: sulphurous coal in fire-room bunkers (which are rarely empty and are rarely inspected) can corrode away the I-beams, the stiffening girders, unexpectedly fast: the first pair of waves which roll neatly under a ship fore and aft, leaving the weak spot unsupported, will crack it, equally neatly, in two.

At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* Marlow recalls some of the great men and ships borne out to sea on the Thames. And John Harris's book, simple and straightforward good incidentally points out a Conradian irony for us. The river, Conrad writes:

had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled – the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of

time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests – and that never returned.

The double-hulled HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, fitted with the new auxiliary steam-engines, lavishly equipped, and commanded by Sir John Franklin, who had served with Nelson at Copenhagen, and distinguished himself as signal midshipman aboard the *Bellerophon* at Trafalgar, were anchored near Greenhithe on May 15, 1845. The well-organized expedition was soon to complete the mapping of the few hundred miles of uncharted Arctic coastline and to sail through the undiscovered Northwest Passage to the clear Pacific; or so it was thought.

As Sir John Barrow, Secretary of the Admiralty, remarked, there could be "no objection with regard to any apprehension of the loss of ships or men"; and the Lords of the Admiralty considered that with "the facilities of the screw propeller and other advantages of modern science, the expedition may be attended with great results". Great results there certainly were. But *Terror* and *Erebus*, the primeval heart of Darkness sprung from chaos, with a little help from an external nature which could still be more than a match for Victorian science, in Conradian fashion moved inward, rather than outward, to enclose their subject crews.

Franklin and his ships were last seen by two whalers, *Prince of Wales* and *Enterprise*, on July 12, 1845, near Lancaster Sound. Made fast to an iceberg on which they had set up an observatory, the two whalers were comfortably camped, in high spirits, to the passengers and crew of the SS *Wamash*, lost without trace in 1909, and USS *Cyclops* (1918), whose disappearances are here considered in detail. But the eye-witness account from the Chuky provides the probable explanation of their ends: sulphurous coal in fire-room bunkers (which are rarely empty and are rarely inspected) can corrode away the I-beams, the stiffening girders, unexpectedly fast: the first pair of waves which roll neatly under a ship fore and aft, leaving the weak spot unsupported, will crack it, equally neatly, in two.

One of Austin's captains, Robert le Mesurier McClure of HMS Investigator, climbing to a 600-foot knoll to survey Franklin's possible routes, was astonished as he gazed to the North and saw nothing but the sea: the Northwest Passage had been discovered. And the next day, pursuit of the main purpose, he was lucky again: shooting a large polar bear he opened up its stomach with his skinning knife to disclose as yet

undigested raisins, pieces of tobacco leaf, bits of pork fat cut into cubes and lengths of surgeon's sticking-plaster.

But nothing much else was discovered until 1854, when Dr John Rae, Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, whilst mapping the west coast of Boothia, came across an Eskimo who told him that about forty white men sledges over the ice after their ships had been beset. Later, the graves and bodies of about thirty white men had been discovered on the mainland, some five more corpses on an island, some in tents, some outside, others under an upturned boat. Only one man, fully clothed, had a double-barrelled gun, and a telescope, beside him. Conrad's cannibal Falk could not have done better.

The mystery of the Mary Celeste, however, is the most famous of them all. And here I must tell you, by way of light relief, that my twenty-fourth, ocean-going, merchant-seaman brother-in-law, with a beard to his waist which entitles him to know about such things, has his own theory. Becalmed, and oppressed, he says, by that circular boredom of the seas which comes at you at any time and in any place from Tilbury to Taitai, the *Tasman Sea*, the crew of the *Mary Celeste* laid bets on the winner of swim round the ship. As they rounded the stern, there came a puff of wind. And another. Several hundred thousand dog paddles later, in fact, the *Mary Celeste* was off to scare the bell-bottomed pants off all the met; and they were off to nowhere in particular.

But this superior explanation for the unexplained ship in full sail in mid-Atlantic, together with previous and competing hypotheses of a Coleridgean brush with an anti-personnel ghost ship; or the suckers of a giant squid blocking the halibutways and inviting themselves to supper; or a Weilsian popping through an elbow-hole in the sleeve of fate; or even the dugong song of a siren; or even simple everyday mass drunkenness, murder, solitary deck-swallowing and suicide, are convincingly discounted by Mr Harris. The Captain's breakfast egg was not still steaming from its opened top upon the cabin table; the ship was storm-rigged, and had shipped a sea; the crew had taken to the boats and been lost, the ship survived.

Harris also discusses the last hours of the USS *Maine* (hardly lost without trace) which was blown up in Havana harbour on the night of February 15, 1898, not by a cunningly placed Spanish mine (an assumption which helped to start the Spanish American War) but by spontaneous combustion in a coal bunker close to the forward magazine; and the *MSV Arcturion*, found abandoned in the Pacific in 1955. But it is the story of the *Tenacious* Electron which, once again, beneath the simple account, seems to part-engage the sub-

conscious, to generate a Conradian resonance.

On the morning of July 10, 1969, the Royal Mail vessel *Piccadilly*, bound from London for the Caribbean, sighted a small yacht ghosting along at about two knots with only a mizzen sail raised. She stopped her engines, and lowered a boat to investigate: the yacht was found to be abandoned; dirty plates filled the cabin sink; the parts of dismembered radio receivers were strewn everywhere; a soldering-iron was still balanced on a can of milk. But there seemed to be plenty of food and water, a life-raft was lashed on the deck, the lowered sails were neatly folded. And only the chronometer was missing from its case.

From the three log-books left in a neat pile on the chart-table it transpired that Donald Crowhurst, unsuccessful small businessman and amateur yachtsman of little experience, competitor in *The Sunday Times* single-handed race around the world which he appeared to be heroically winning with a series of remarkable times, had in fact traced a different and altogether more private course, a voyage of self-discovery which spider-webbed around itself in a seldom-visited part of the South Atlantic.

But why did he take his chronometer with him? Well, Conrad, it seems, knew about that too: "starting out on a voyage" he remembered

was like being launched into Eternity. I say advisedly Eternity instead of space, because of the boundless silence which swallowed up one for eighty days – for one hundred days – for even yet more days of an existence without echoes and whispers. Like Eternity itself. For one can't conceive a vocal Eternity. An enormous silence, in which there was nothing to connect one with the Universe but the incessant wheeling about of the sun

and other celestial bodies, the alternation of light and shadow, eternally chasing each other over the sky. The time of the earth, though most carefully recorded by the half-hourly bells, did not count in reality.

Captain Brierty, the outwardly impeccable man of honour and high ideals who is softly degenerate inside, whose sympathetic identification with the Jim he judges has revealed to him his own inner lack of innate, biological courage, also commits "his reality and his shame together to the keeping of the sea". The boatswain's mate calls to Brierty's second-in-command as their ship passes to the north of the Hector Bank. "Will you please come aft, Mr Jones," he says. "There's a funny thing. I don't like to touch it. It was Captain Brierty's gold chronometer watch carefully hung under the rail by its chain."

"I see what I am," Crowhurst wrote in his log. "I see the nature of my offence. . . . It is finished – it is finished IT IS THE MERCY." And there is also Crowhurst the would-be ingenious electronics engineer, his track of life tangled across the surface of the uncaring ocean in a self-made circuit diagram of sixteen thousand solitary miles, an outward game which rang inner rings around him. "Nature does not allow God to sin any more except one," he concluded. "That is the Sin of Concealment. . . . I will play this game when I choose I will resign the game. . . . It might be the sceptical games-playing Decad in *Nostromo*, all alone in a 'world of cloud and water, of natural forces and forms of nature' who at last 'beheld the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images' and, having already been engulfed by his abuse of his own mind, completed his descent into the outer Placid Gulf of the sea, where, 'swallowed up in the immense indifference of things' he also 'disappeared without a trace'."

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Wring Your Hands

Wring your hands, curve them like the river.
The laughing willow calls me
To where the cranes are flying over the Larna.
Epithetism, in love, flooding its banks.

Their clear path is Alhambra, Rio Ebro,
Calabria, coloured, with its
Huge clouds of alabaster.
Back – into the deluge, the laughter, the oblivion.

Moscow, 1969

Eugene Dubnov

Translated from the Russian by the author and C. Newman

Cartographer's course

Oliver M. Ashford

NORMAN J. W. THROWER
(Editor)

The three voyages of Edmond Halley
in the *Paramore* 1698–1701
Two volumes. 392 pp., with a
portfolio of maps. Hakluyt Society.
£20.
0 904 180 02 6

Towards the end of 1985 many of us will be searching the night sky for a glimpse of Halley's comet, which on its last spectacular appearance in 1910 aroused much admiration and awe. The more curious may then wish to know more about the man after whom the comet is named. Edmond Halley was born in 1656 and was thus a few years younger than Samuel Pepys and Isaac Newton, both of whom he knew in great respect. Although he is now remembered primarily as the first astronomer to predict successfully the return of a comet, he also made

meteorology, navigation and cartography. His chart of the trade winds, published in 1686, has been acclaimed as the first meteorological chart, while his Atlantic chart, which appeared round about 1701, is considered to be the first printed map with isolines – it contained lines of equal magnetic declination (the angle between true north and magnetic north).

More information about these achievements and other aspects of Halley's life and work is lucidly presented in the scholarly eighty-page introduction to Norman J. W. Thrower's timely publication. But to reproduce the journals of three voyages which Halley made in the *Paramore* between 1698 and 1701, which have been claimed by Sydney Chapman as the first sea-journeys undertaken for a purely scientific object. The journal of the third voyage, which was confined to the English Channel and resulted in the publication of the first tidal chart, has not previously been published. The journals of the two earlier voyages in

the Atlantic are compared with Dalrymple's earlier published versions, and Halley's charts of the Atlantic and the Channel are reproduced in facsimile in a portfolio which constitutes Volume Two of this important work.

The book's main appeal will of course be to those interested in the history of the scientific exploration of the oceans. But the introduction will also prove to be an authoritative source on Halley himself – there will be no excuse if in 1985 one of England's greatest scientists is presented to the public solely as an astronomer. Thrower suggests that but for his "antidetical attitude if not for his liberal views on religion" Edmond Halley would have been given a public memorial in England which adequately represents the estimation in which he is held – his tomb might be in Westminster Abbey instead of in the church of St Margaret at Lee, where it is apparently "in a state of disrepair and even difficult to find". Let us hope that this situation will be rectified before his comet is once again an object of admiration.

Seeking to prosper

Gordon Donaldson

WILLIAM R. BROCK

Scotus Americanus: A survey of the sources for links between Scotland and America in the eighteenth century.
293pp. Edinburgh University Press.
£10.
0 85224 420 7

Over the past generation and more a good deal of work has been done on both sides of the Atlantic on the links between Scotland and America in the eighteenth century, but most of it has produced either general (and sometimes superficial) surveys or narrowly specialized studies. William Brock's admirably planned book, which for the first time gives systematic treatment to the whole vast field, is one of the most important and useful works on any aspect of Scottish emigration.

The volume has eight chapters and a "Retrospect". The chapters have titles like "The Glasgow Tobacco Trade", "The Highland Migration" and "Faith, Education and Intellect", and each, if it does not fall precisely into two parts, represents a dual approach, one directed at giving a straightforward account of the topic and the other at evaluating the relevant sources.

The passages which present the general picture of each topic cover familiar ground, but they are a model of lucid and succinct exposition in straightforward English and incorporate many apt, novel and lively illustrative details from the source material, not least in the form of quotations from letters, which at once bring the reader into touch with individuals. Brock's readers are never likely to forget that the history of emigration is the history of the lives of countless individuals - at any rate, as he reminds us, those about whom information has been able to survive. "The hundreds of young men who went out... as factors, storekeepers, assistants, clerks and bookkeepers, left voluminous but uneven evidence of their work and problems", but "the annals of the poor are disappointingly thin".

Brock looks back before 1707, when the Scots "in sacrificing independence had gained an empire", to earlier

indications of the "process by which the people of a small, poor but vigorous country sought opportunity to prosper". At the other end of the story he notes that "the Revolution closed a chapter in Scottish-American relations", and he might almost have concluded the book in 1783, though he has some useful things to say about the post-war complications, legal and financial. Almost the only criticism one might make of the book is that it contains too many typographical errors, including at least two scrambled dates - 1733 for 1773 on page 88 and 1777 for 1773 on p 131 - and a highly respected Edinburgh firm of Writers to the Signet will not be pleased to see after their name not the initials W. S. but W. C.

Brock, with his mastery of detail, is better entitled than most to proceed to generalizations. Lowland Scots in the Glasgow Tobacco Trade "organised the most efficient business of the age" and formed merchant communities in all the commercial cities, they "permeated the official establishment", they supplied clergy for the Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches, they served as tutors in hundreds of colonial families and they established schools. But, above all, they had a powerful influence upon medicine, philosophical ideas and the political theory of the revolutionaries. Nor was intellectual influence exerted only by the professional classes, for of 166 tobacco merchants identified between 1740 and 1790, thirty-six had matriculated at the University of Glasgow and many others attended classes there. This is not the popular picture, which is apt to represent Scottish emigrants as being chiefly defeated Jacobites and dispossessed crofters, and Brock warns against "a host of deeply-rooted misconceptions".

Every American who seeks his roots in Scotland thinks he belongs to a "clan" and wants to know "what tartan he is entitled to wear", but the chances that his Scottish ancestor was a Lowlander who dismissed clans and tartans as relics of a backward culture which he despised. Rowland Rothoff has recently collected, in an article on "Under the kilt: Variations on the Scottish-American Ground" (*Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 1, no 2) facts which can only raise shudders in those who know some history. "Highland clans and Lowland family

associations, virtually unknown in the heyday of Scottish emigration, by 1979 blanketed the country in tartan" and of the 2300 pipers and 1200 drummers who belonged to 180 pipe bands in 1979, nearly a third had no family ties whatever with Scotland at all, let alone with the Highlands. The craze is agreeable to those who invent and market "clan tartans" and to self-styled "chiefs" who receive from their supposed "clansmen" in the United States an adulation to which they are not accustomed in Scotland.

In the later part of the book there is a "Guide to the Sources", extending to thirty pages, arranged under headings corresponding broadly to those of the chapters. Brock was fortunate to be organizing his survey at a time when work on Scottish archives, at both central and local levels, made it incomparably easier than it used to be to discover what is available. Thus details can be given about the contents of the Scottish national archives, papers in the National Library of Scotland, material in American states,

Scottish regional, district and university collections, and documents in private hands which have been surveyed by the National Register of Archives (Scotland), as well as published sources. Anyone who sets out in future to produce books dealing comprehensively with the subject will find his paths well signposted.

There are two appendices, which, like Chapter Six on "Scotland and American Medicine", are the work of C. Helen Brock. One of them lists "Publications by Emigrant Scottish Doctors" and another "Scottish Doctors practising in America and American Doctors educated in Scotland", with some 500 names; and there are biographical notes on some clergy too. The index, which runs to nearly thirty pages, adds some hundreds of names of Scottish emigrants, not all of them in Donald Whyte's *Dictionary of Scottish Emigrants to the U.S.A.* Brock's work will help in many ways to satisfy the unending demand of Americans for Scottish pedigrees.

It is easy enough to see some of the reasons for Scottish success - education and thrift, for example, or the adaptability of a doctor who overcame "the Scottish peculiarities of pronunciation" that "only a practiced and acute ear could have discovered that he was once a native of Scotland". But there were disappointments on both sides. Of one shipload of immigrants it was remarked that not "one of a thousand of these deluded people" did not wish themselves home again after twelve months in America, and Charles Niaber, who thought he was going to a college which was "the Princeton of the west", found that it consisted of two rooms and a handful of indifferent students. On the other hand, Arthur Lee wrote of Edinburgh, "Nothing can be more disagreeable to me than this town and the manners of the people in it." John Lang, offered a living in Virginia, seems to have thought that the immorality of the parishioners was not offset by a salary of 16,000 pounds of "sweet scented tobacco".

The militia question

Duncan Forbes

DAVID R. RAYNOR (Editor)

Sister Peg: A pamphlet hitherto unknown by David Hume
127pp. Cambridge University Press.
£15.50.
0 521 24299 1

What is "unknown" about this pamphlet on the Scottish Militia question, written in 1760, is that it is by Hume, and not Adam Ferguson. David R. Raynor has convinced me, at any rate, though he hardly does himself justice when he says that "everything points to Hume as the author". It is not as easy as that. For instance, it is a rather dangerous argument to say that Ferguson didn't write anything else like this. Hume didn't either. Nor does the use of "Mac Lurcher" for the Highlanders necessarily exclude Ferguson, though in English pronunciation it is even ruder than Dr Raynor supposes. In so far as a lurcher was a sort of mongrel. But one might

argue that this would be a good smokescreen, and if one insists that Ferguson would be unlikely to be rude about Highlanders for any reason and in any cause, one might say the same about Hume and "Lewis Baboon" or the French people. And if that stands only for certain aspects of French behaviour and policy, one could say the same for "Mac Lurcher". Not all Highlanders were thieves and Jacobites, and public disavowal of one's Gaelic provenance is a far from untypical Highland phenomenon, though I do not know precisely when it began.

One might argue that the circumstantial knowledge displayed in *Sister Peg*, even the arguments, were not outside the abilities of any reasonably competent and interested contemporary (think how much a great many people have learnt or could easily gather about the legal, political and historical background of the Falklands Crisis, in a matter of weeks) were it not for certain specifically Humian echoes that Raynor very cleverly and on the whole convincingly

picks up in his Notes, which also help the reader to identify the allegorical goings-on for the most part fully and professionally enough. (Though Hume in his letter to Montesquieu did not praise Hardwicke's abolition of the heritable jurisdictions - on the contrary.)

As for the pamphlet's style, the point about Hume's "identification" with the wits of Queen Anne's reign is a good one, and on the whole the style is not what one would expect from Ferguson. I say "on the whole" because towards the end there are what sound very like Fergusonian resonances. "Without we carry this quality along with us, other advantages are of little avail." Could Hume, in 1760, possibly have written that? And some of the matter too, of the moralistic, "Machiavellian", anti-"corruption" variety, is what one associates more with Ferguson than with Hume. In fact I am led to speculate whether perhaps Ferguson wrote the final chapter (presented as a speech made by a Scottish member in the House of Commons) himself, and then handed over to Hume, or something of the sort.

Peg is no masterpiece. In fact realization of this is, according to Raynor, why Hume suppressed it. I cannot believe that he was writing "for posterity". And it is more important for biographers, bibliographers, and political and social historians than for advocates of political theory. In fact it illustrates that "man" that is his feeling of national outrage and friendship, rather than the detached "philosopher", and incidentally it was not "Hume's strong pronouncements against standing armies, and in favour of citizen militias" that led me to be surprised that he had not devoted an essay to the subject; what surprised me was Hume's missing such a good opportunity to devote a separate essay to the "philosophical" treatment of so hot and important a controversy.

Peg does not tell us much more about Hume's political thought and attitude to militias than we know already, and one can only assume that the editors accepted it for the series in which it looks somewhat out of place because 1) anything discovered to be by Hume is important, as is 2) anything connected with "felicitous humanism". Raynor's Introduction ends with the remark that a reader of this text might feel inclined to call Hume the "Scottish Machiavelli". I feel inclined to call this the sort of red herring that is liable to be washed up by the "divine humanist" spate that is running so high just now (my apologies to anglers). It spools a piece of detective work and a very ingenious and entertaining display of learning.

Richly illustrated and with a foreword by Lord Home, *The Salmon Book* by Douglas Sutherland (160pp. Collins, £7.95, 000 216664 X) was published recently. A portrait of one of the most famous Scottish gillies, Auld Rob o' the Trows, painted by Robert Rian, is on the front of the jacket.

FICTION

Playing fast and loose

Patricia Craig

JULIA O'FAOLAIN

The Obedient Wife
230pp. Allen Lane. £7.50.
0 7139 1467 X

As a symbol of Catholic tenacity, the mass rock - associated with Ireland in the penal days - has been exchanged for the rock mass, which signifies the church's eagerness to present itself as a thoroughly modern institution - ease of manner, showmanship and all. An appropriate setting for rock masses and ordinary travesties of church rituals is California, where such popularizations are an earnest affair, or "living by marked down values", an unlikely trait in a lover. Can it be that adulteration of church doctrines encourages adultery? To play fast and loose with selected precepts while professing a fundamental belief in the church's moral imperatives indicates, at any rate, a certain infirmity of purpose.

The novel is about failures of instinct, as well as (more commonplace) social and conjugal failures; what spoils Leo for Carla, as much as anything else, is a lack of grace in his handling of emotional matters. "Leo, you're gauche", she tells him; he cannot deny it. (The caustic exchanges between these two give the novel some of its most striking effects.) Unlike poor, Catholic, confused Sybil, whose faith for the priest is denied an outlet, Carla cannot consider herself "a rebel for lust"; truly, she has nothing to rebel against, and just, as an abstract force, holds little charm for her. "Sex... is only powerful when it's

encompasses order, solicitude and fastidiousness. Brought up on Boccaccio, she is apt to view clerical lapses from celibacy in a worldly and tolerant spirit somewhat at odds with the intense austerities of Northern Catholicism - even in its debased state. Not that Carla has any feeling for religion at all: the church's efforts to make itself palatable embarrass her, its excesses dismay her and its compromises worry her, once she forgoes the right to be disinterested. In her relations with Leo, she cannot quite separate the priest from the man, and it is only the latter she has any use for. Leo, by his choice of profession, has placed himself outside the range of ordinary affections; on his own terms, he is either damned from the start of any carnal affair, or "living by marked down values", an unlikely trait in a lover. Can it be that adulteration of church doctrines encourages adultery? To play fast and loose with selected precepts while professing a fundamental belief in the church's moral imperatives indicates, at any rate, a certain infirmity of purpose.

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an exceptionally polished work; if its ending disappoints feminists, who require gestures of social rebelliousness from their fiction, just as Catholic readers used to require wholesomeness from theirs, it is none the less, appropriate, in that it represents an assertion of the values its heroine has lived by.

Suffering in W2

Linda Taylor

BERNICE RUBENS

Madame Sousatzka
187pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10844 6

The characters in Bernice Rubens's novels are prey to a feeling of suffocation: their struggles are private, dirt, futile; the pressures on them are failure, guilt, neglect and loneliness. Their lives informed by Jewishness (often their own, as well as the author's), they strive for a place in a bleak world, love ambivalently and wily point the finger at their own sufferings. "About suffering I know plenty", says Mrs Crominski in her book. "English when Madame Sousatzka tells her not to attend her son's piano lessons. "All the mothers must suffer a little", the lofty Sousatzka had flattered, knowing only too well the masochistic pleasure that involves. Suffering begets guilt and Marcus, the eleven-year-old Crominski son, caught in the crossfire between mother and piano teacher, constantly vows "to make it up to Mrs Crominski for his lapses of affection, his irritability, his secretiveness and inconstancy; he 'felt his love for her killing him'".

In *Madame Sousatzka*, Bernice Rubens's second novel (first published in 1962, it is now reissued as the first in a projected uniform edition, and is shortly to be turned into a film), Sousatzka and Crominski are at the beginning of a line of middle-aged female characters whose failures fill the pages of Rubens's books. Madame Sousatzka, though, stands out from their usual "brown world" of dowdy coats, unsightly hats and listless stockings as something of an exotic. From Marcus's Stamford Hill perspective, she seems to embody everything that is vivid and exciting. The lives in W2 with a countess called "Uncle", an osteopath called Mr Cordie, and a fortune teller called Penny. She's a specialist who teaches school to prodigies by the "Sousatzka method". "You must forget everything you have learnt... The hands are nothing, my darling. I want to be the whole body."

The Sousatzka method, though, is a new Madame has so far produced no one famous. The exotic trappings of her life are a disguise: her osteopath has no patients, her countess is a sedentary bohemian, her fortune teller is a prostitute and she herself is Mrs Suskatz, the house they live in is a rotting Victorian pile with a rapidly expiring lease. No matter; together they approach their problems in a cavalier fashion, and they have Marcus - who is replacing (if he's not careful) maternal suffocation by pleasurable extinction in W2.

The characters in *Madame Sousatzka* are remarkable for their resistance to the dark forces: "dying gets harder and harder" says Mr Cordie; Mrs Crominski takes "anxiety like a pep-pill"; and, when Marcus finally rejects Sousatzka, she is surprised by her own stoicism - "by all

the laws of nature she should have died of a broken heart". Instead, she turns to the piano - "Once again, Sousatzka, to a scale there is no end and no beginning." The structure of the novel supports this philosophy, beginning in darkness with Mrs. Crominski returning to a shrouded house, and ending with Madame Sousatzka drawing back the curtains on a dawning day.

In later Rubens, the dice are heavily loaded against survival and, by 1979, in *Spring Sonata*, life is so unpleasant that the potential Marcus figure refuses to be born. In 1962, though, life was hard but it wasn't annihilating. In *Madame Sousatzka* Bernice Rubens lightly shrugged off her sense of suffocation with a precise and acerbic wit.

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Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

MARGARET YORKE

Devil's Work
170pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 147580 5

Made redundant in middle-age and wandering purposelessly round the town of Berbridge, Alan Parker meets a young widow with a small daughter, Tessa. Later Tessa vanishes and Alan is, for a time, suspected by the police. Violence done to children can be too facile a card to play, but Margaret Yorke wrings the heartstrings with care and subtlety in a well-written study of conflicting neuroses.

RUTH RENDELL

Master of the Moor
219pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 146930 9

Stephen Whalby lives under the brooding presence of Vangmoor, in central England. He's obsessed by the bleak, high-expanse with its deserted lead mines and ancient standing stones. Though he immediately

informs the police when he finds the body of a murdered woman on the moor, his obsession is known, and he comes under suspicion. And suspicion is doubled when a second body is found in similar circumstances. Inaccurately written and constructed, this is another of Ruth Rendell's skilful studies in abnormal psychology: a powerful, intriguing, if ultimately depressing novel.

LAWRENCE BLOCK

The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza
213pp. Robert Hale. £6.75.
0 7091 9404 8

New York burglar Bernie Rhodenbarr, now with a permanent partner in the shape of dog-groomer Carolyn Kaiser (described by Bernie's girl friend as "that lesbian dwarf, the fat little one who always smells of Wet Dog"), turns over a select residence on West Eighteenth Street and emerges with a pair of emerald ear-rings, a Piaget wristwatch, a 1913 Liberty Head nickel, and a bushel or two of trouble. It's practically impossible not to take to Bernie: he's literate, candid and extremely funny. Deep down, too, he has a fundamental honesty: when it's not a question of other people's personal property.

Bodily tracts

Roger Scruton

MARGE PIERCY

Braided Lives
445pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.
0 7139 1478 5

LEE ZACHARIAS

Lessons
342pp. Faber. £7.95.
0 571 11910 7

HILMA WOLITZER

Hearts
324pp. Brighton: Harvester Press.
£6.95.
0 7108 0475 X

Marge Piercy is an established author, and presumably has an established readership - though it is very difficult to gauge from *Braided Lives* what qualities of commitment and literary endurance are required in order to belong to it. The book is written in a chatty, cluttered style, too reminiscent of a woman's magazine to sustain the feminist ideology of the text; at the same time the succession of mundane episodes so lacks urgency that only a kept woman would have the time and curiosity to read with interest beyond the first twenty pages.

The novel concerns a girl's adolescence during the 1950s. It describes middle-class home life, campus parties, casual encounters, pregnancy and abortion. From all this the girl emerges, with social, personal, and political commitments. At first we are treated to samples of her poetry; later, poetry is exchanged for opinions. It is hard to say which is the more excruciatingly naïve. The author boldly assumes that one will have been so touched by her heroine's do-it-yourself abortion as to feel unquestioning sympathy for a woman's "right to choose", but this assumption is hardly consonant with the extreme crudeness with which the experience (like everything else) is described. Not that Ms Piercy is a rantier: far from it. She is too lenient towards her heroine's own self-indulgences to find time for her own.

Braided Lives, however, is a memorable book: it contains about the worst examples of English prose that I have come across in a published novel. The following sentence is not untypical: "I also find myself hard in love in a way I have to search far back in my life to match." The machine-gun fire of monosyllables, the desperate cliché ("deep in love") avoided only by an absurd figure of speech ("that in love"), the obscurity of grammar and sentiment, the unfeeling casualness of tone, the loss of all simplicity and directness - such is characteristic of the entire idiom of the novel.

Braided Lives is enthusiastically compared in the publisher's blurb to *Kinfolk*. The same curious praise is also lavished by her publisher on Lee Zacharias for her first novel, *Lessons*. Ms Zacharias is scarcely more conscious of the finer points of writing than Ms Piercy, but the psychological states of her heroine would be illustrated by literary subtleties:

"Did you...? I wanted to ask if she put out for him, I wanted to ask if she put out for Dick, but I didn't know how to phrase it. My mother had said 'have intercourse', but that sounded disgusting, like having an enema. Sandy said 'get screwed', but I didn't want to be like Sandy any more."

Not wanting to be like Sandy any more is one of the many vagrant life-projects that compel the heroine through the episodes of *Lessons* to take used (or rather fallen into) by Ms Piercy, and the heroine has the same self-centred rambling outlook; the same consciousness of her body and its functions, the same self-deceit about the nature and quality of her passions, the same mundane thoughts and values. After a while I began to suffer from the sense that I was reading a continuation of the same life-story; the girl had improved with age, had ceased to write poetry or to have opinions, and instead had begun to play the clarinet. She had acquired an increased consciousness of the difference

between men and women, and a kind of vulnerability which enabled her to observe others as though they were not mere extensions of herself. In the end I even began to feel spasms of sympathy for this comic character who has the bad taste to take herself for tragic. Her search for an author remains, however, unfulfilled, and the book ends as pitilessly and as pointlessly as it begins.

As far as plot is concerned, Hilma Wolitzer's *Hearts* is a definite improvement. A young woman, suddenly widowed, travels with her step-daughter to the grandparents who are to look after the child. American distances provide several days of travel, and during that time the woman falls in love with a hitch-hiker, while the child emerges from hatred and pain to see her father's widow as a person to whom she can and must turn for solace and companionship. The transformation of the child is convincingly described, and Ms Wolitzer has an eye for detail. But it is hard to read the novel with any relish. The same obsession with the biological fact of womanhood pervades its pages, and the reader is constantly assailed by gynaecological technicalities. The child has begun her periods: we are shown a blood-soaked sanitary towel in the lavatory. The widow at first suspects, and then knows herself to be pregnant: the details of a pregnancy test are painstakingly described. There are long dull moments in the abortion clinic, absurdly brought to an end by a bomb attack: people are constantly inspecting themselves and others; nobody can go to the bathroom without the author noticing it ("While Robin was using the bathroom, Linda could hear Wollie moving around next door in number 9"). "Holding her legs together she tottered to the bathroom door and knocked. 'Hey,' she said, 'I have to go in'; "Linda was sleepy and for once she claimed the bathroom first" and so on). The obsession with the body and its functions is so great that all experience, even that of erotic desire, is invaded by it. "His thigh, resting at least six inches from Linda's, seemed swollen and confined by the chinos, and she felt an erotic impulse that shocked and appalled her. Now, of all times. It could have something to do with a hormonal imbalance; so many things were going on inside her that she could not discern or control..."

The emergence of the gynaecological novel should be no cause for surprise. For some time now feminists have been claiming that women should cease to be ashamed of their natural condition, and that they should integrate their urino-genital tracts into the totality of their experience and so resume "control" over bodies which have for too long been obedient to the whims and fantasies of men. The result leads one to think that it was not only shame that led the female novelists of the golden age to pass over these matters. The issue is ideological, and it is probably necessary for a reviewer to protest that he is not against menstruation, that some of his best friends even menstruate, before suggesting that it requires more than ordinary literary skill to evoke an interest, whether lyrical or dramatic, in its description. The poetry of Bloom's defecation is one of the great achievements of English literature; the aspiring feminist writer should study it, and take care. To incorporate such details into a narrative without detracting from the gentle irony and touching emotion which pervade it, Joyce had to remake the entire structure, form and purpose of the novel. To interrupt a common dramatic narrative with such details, while employing a style as graceful, inferior to that of Barbara Cartland, is to risk the tiny promise of literary effect that such meagre equipment contains. And while a writer's feelings remain on the level that requires Mrs Cartland's style, it would be far better to imitate her content.

Julia O'Faolain contributes a story, "This Is My Body", to the most recent issue of *Sho! Story Monthly* (70pp. Ardmore, Methven Road, Whitecraig, Glasgow, £1.); her contributions are a new story of Boris and Brophy, "Singled Out" by James Thurber, Fred Unquart and J. V. Stevenson, and Chapter IV of Alasdair Gray's novel *Jane*.

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